

UPHOLDING THE VEIL:

HINDU WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER
AND CASTE IDENTITY IN RURAL PAKISTAN

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1984

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ABSTRACT

The data for this thesis derive from the Kutchi Koli, a Hindu Scheduled Caste, currently domiciled in rural Sind, Pakistan. Surrounded by the dominant Moslem majority and several different Hindu groups, the Kutchi are regarded as inferior by the former, and themselves regard the latter as inferior. There is no social or religious contact between the Kutchi and any other group in Sind, direct interaction being limited to the economic sphere.

The ethnographic and theoretical foci of the thesis are Kutchi women's perceptions of gender and caste identity. The ideology and practice of female seclusion being powerful on the Indian sub-continent, and perhaps especially in Pakistan, Kutchi women are isolated and encapsulated within their villages. They are thus able to maintain a perhaps surprising pride in their caste identity and in their own rituals and traditions. The women have their own world-view, forms of communication, and private sphere. They have no need to denigrate themselves or change codes to cope with external society, as do their menfolk who have to face regular ridicule and discrimination.

The interesting and resultant social situation is one of different perceptions of reality and value between the sexes. The women consider themselves important in terms of practical and symbolic reproduction. The men regard themselves as superior in relation to their womenfolk, but have comparatively low self-esteem vis-a-vis the men from many other groups.

In short, my thesis is that where there is differential access to the "outside" and where the sexes belong to one group, but to two distinct parts of that group, the sexes do not share a social context, nor indeed a similar ideology.

PREFACE

Firstly, I would like to thank the Social Science Research Council (now the E.S.R.C.) for the funding which made my research in Pakistan possible.

I would like to thank Dr. Mary Noble, who supervised my work throughout and was a great source of support and advice. I would like to thank the rest of the Social Anthropology staff at Edinburgh University for their enthusiasm and encouragement, especially Dr. A. Good and Mr. A. Abramson; and Dr. E. Hanley and Dr. A. Barnard for their invaluable help with the word processor.

My fellow post-graduates provided a constant supply of emotional and intellectual sustenance and made the writing period somewhat less of a toil; specific thanks here go to Robert Depew, Michael Farrell, John Eddison, Hooshang Philsooph, Anne-Marie Bostyn and Daniel Wight.

In Sind, my thanks are due to too many to mention by name. Numerous families offered us hospitality and friendship, which proved enriching and humbling experiences. To the Kutchi Koli villagers who welcomed and unfailingly supported us for twenty months I give especial thanks: specifically to the families of Yakub, Tharsi and Lal. I must also thank the Mitchells, the Stocks, the Entwistles, the Starmers, the Graingers, Diane Windsor, Bishop Bashir Jivan of Hyderabad and family, Padri Ishaq and family, and Padri Mothi and family all of Tando Ala Yar.

Lastly and above all, I want to thank my husband, John Young, for first of all suggesting Sind, for his companionship in the field, for his encouragement, criticisms and support at the writing stage, and for all his contributions beyond the call of either anthropology or marriage.

C.S.L.Y.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	1
DECLARATION	2
ABSTRACT	3
PREFACE	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
ILLUSTRATIONS	10
PLAN OF THESIS	11
CHAPTER ONE..... THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTRODUCTION	12
Introduction	
1) Geographical and Linguistic	13
a) Climate	14
2) The Hindu People	15
3) The Village	16
a) The Layout	17
b) Animals	18
c) Agricultural Activities	19
d) Population	
4) Kinship	21
5) Religion	22
6) Clothing	24
Conclusion	25
CHAPTER TWO..... THEORY AND METHODOLOGY	27
Introduction	
1) The Problem	
2) The Methodology	28
3) The Literature	40
a) The People	41
b) The Ideas	46
c) The Women	52
Conclusion	62

CHAPTER THREE... WOMEN WITHIN THE FAMILY	64
PART ONE: WOMEN, POWER AND LABOUR	65
Introduction	
1) Power and Authority	
2) Status and Prestige	68
3) Ownership	69
a) Land	
b) Property	72
c) Animals	
d) Jewelry	75
e) Money	76
f) Utensils/Implements	80
4) Labour	80
a) Role Segregation	
b) Hearth and Water Source	86
Conclusion	90
PART TWO: WOMEN IN THE NATAL HOME	91
Introduction	
1) Early Differentiation	
2) Growing Up	94
3) Men and Daughters	96
4) Later Differentiation	97
5) The Socialisation Process	99
a) Caste	
b) Training	101
6) End of Girlhood	102
7) Kinship Bonds	105
Conclusion	109
PART THREE: WOMEN IN THE AFFINAL HOME	110
Introduction	
1) The Wedding Ritual	
2) Transition	118
3) The Mother-in-Law	121
4) Avoidance	124

5) Kin and Affines	127
6) Marital Differences	131
7) Assimilation and Marital Compatibility	135
8) Widows and Widowers	137
Conclusion	140
 PART FOUR: WOMEN AS MOTHERS	141
Introduction	
1) Conception	142
a) Menstruation	144
b) Embryo's Development	148
2) Birth	151
a) Practices	
b) Afterwards	155
c) Purity Customs	157
d) Customs for the Newborn	162
e) Naming	164
3) Infertility	167
4) Birth Control	170
Conclusion	172
 CHAPTER FOUR.... WOMEN WITHIN THE VILLAGE	174
PART ONE: WOMEN, SPEECH AND THOUGHT	176
Introduction	
1) Female Conversation	
2) Female Speech and Thought	184
Conclusion	197
 PART TWO: WOMEN AS RITUAL SPECIALISTS	199
Introduction	
1) Death	203
2) Festivals	208
a) <u>Hachmo</u>	
b) <u>Hutani</u>	213
c) <u>No'Northa</u>	216

d) <u>Divari</u> and <u>Parwa</u>	218
Conclusion	221
 PART THREE: WOMEN AND SEXUALITY	223
Introduction	
1) Limitations	224
2) Affairs	226
3) Subtle Transgressions	230
4) Sexual Intercourse	233
Conclusion	237
 PART FOUR: WOMEN AS NON-MEN	238
Introduction	
1) Space and Status	240
2) Space and Contact	246
Conclusions	250
 CHAPTER FIVE.... WOMEN AND EXTERNAL SOCIETY	252
PART ONE: WOMEN AS VILLAGERS	254
Introduction	
1) Moving Home	257
2) Visiting	258
3) Illness	264
Conclusion	269
 PART TWO: WOMEN AND THE PRESERVATION OF ETHNIC PURITY	270
Introduction	
1) Language	271
2) Clothing	275
3) Food	279
Conclusion	293

PART THREE: WOMEN AS MODELS FOR COMPARISON	295
Introduction	
1) Sind	296
2) Gujarat	301
Conclusion	307
 PART FOUR: WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE	 309
Introduction	
1) History	310
2) Ritual	312
3) Wealth	322
Conclusion	328
 CHAPTER SIX..... CONCLUSION	 330
1) Ethnographic Summary	
2) Theoretical Summary	333
In Conclusion	353
 LIST OF THE PEOPLES OF SIND	 359
GLOSSARY	361
BIBLIOGRAPHY	365

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1) Pakistan | 25a |
| 2) Sind, showing main concentration of Hindu Peoples. | 25b |
| 3) Village | 25c |

GENEALOGIES

26

PLATES

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1) Village | 26a |
| 2) Men binding a field. | |
| 3) Women picking cotton. | |
| 4) Man building house wall. | 63a |
| 5) Women planting peppers. | |
| 6) Young married woman churning buttermilk. | |
| 7) Women gathered to sing the wedding songs. | 173a |
| 8) Women preparing the <u>lolra</u> . | |
| 9) The wedding ceremony. (<u>phera phar</u>) | |
| 10) Men preparing the wedding food. | 251a |
| 11) Kutchi men with Sindi landlords. | |
| 12) Parkari Koli encampment. | |

THESIS LAYOUT

The proposed plan of the thesis is as follows.

Firstly I will give a very brief introduction to the area studied - the geography, the people, their way of life and thought. There follows a statement of the ethnographic "problem" to be considered, the methodology used to tackle it, and a review of the existing literature in the area. After this, the emphasis will be upon an ethnographic account of Kutchi Koli women's conceptions of their gender and caste identity. This ethnographic section will be divided into three parts, with sub-chapters in each; - women within the family; women in the village; women in external society. The frame of reference thus develops from the closed and internal to a wider view of the social world involving other groups and their necessary inclusion in the Kutchi Koli world-view.

Between the sections a certain amount of ethnographic repetitiveness will become apparent. I consider this unavoidable, because my wish is to present each section to a certain extent logically complete in itself. This necessitates drawing upon data from all areas of social life.

The last section will be concerned with theoretical conclusions and implications and will therefore develop the theoretical stance adopted at the beginning with reference to the subsequent ethnography.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTRODUCTION

Introduction.

1) Geographical and Linguistic.

a) Climate.

2) The Hindu People.

3) The Village.

a) The Layout.

b) Animals.

c) Agricultural Activities.

d) Population.

4) Kinship.

5) Religion.

6) Clothing.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

My research was conducted over a period of twenty months in a village located in the Sind province of S.E. Pakistan. I was accompanied by my husband, who was also undertaking anthropological research in a separate field . The methodological aspects of the project will be discussed in chapter two. In this introduction, I shall sketch very briefly the general background of the village, its inhabitants and their way of life.

1) GEOGRAPHICAL AND LINGUISTIC.

Sind is bordered by the Arabian Sea to the south-west, where Karachi is situated to the west of the Indus delta, a large commercial centre, now very westernised and the most important port of Pakistan. To the north of Sind lies Punjab Province and to the west, Baluchistan. Over the Indian border are situated Rajasthan to the east and Gujarat to the south. (See map1)

Probably on account of its sea-coast, Sind has always been a very cosmopolitan area of Pakistan, where many different peoples and languages co-exist. The traditional language of the province is Sindhi, which is still predominantly spoken in the market towns and in the countryside. However in the cities, Urdu (the official language of Pakistan) is chiefly used for communication. Urdu has strong Moslem connections and is a more prestigious language, being adopted by any who want to improve their status and position. It is the second language of a large percentage of the population.

Many Urdu speakers arrived after Partition in 1947, (Moslems from India) and many Sindhi-speaking Hindus fled from Pakistan - thus altering the country's population and also its authority structure.

In addition to the two afore-mentioned languages, there exist many other languages and dialects in the area and most of the inhabitants have a knowledge (albeit slight in some cases) of more than their mother tongue.

Approximately one hundred and fifty miles north-east from Karachi lies Hyderabad, a very old and traditional walled city, of limited space and large population. It is a bustling, cluttered place, appearing essentially untouched by change and most western influences.

To reach the village where I conducted the majority of my research, one has to take a road eastwards from Hyderabad, towards the Thar desert for roughly thirty miles, and then either follow a mud

road beside irrigation canals for four miles, or take the alternative shorter route over high sand dunes and through thorn scrub for two miles. The main road is left approximately seven miles before the small market town of Tando Allahyar is reached. (See map 2, taken from Grainger and Grainger. 1980.)

a) CLIMATE.

The climate of the area is that of tropical monsoon - being twenty-five degrees north of the Equator. The villagers themselves classify the year into three distinct seasons ; - the cold season, November to January; the hot season, March to May; the wet season, July to September. February and October are somewhat anomalous, as they are pleasant in-between months being neither too hot nor too cold.

The hot season is characterised by dry heat and the strong, hot south-west sea wind. The wind drops at the beginning of the wet season and the humidity increases. The villagers do not think of this as the hottest time however and most complaints concern the wind, which they hate. Even during the monsoon the rainfall is not extensive, with few large downpours. Rain also occurs during the winter months, but without regularity or dependability.

Thus, had the area been dependent solely upon rain for crop growth, it would have been in a poor condition. There is however an abundance of linked irrigation canals bringing fertility to the former desert landscape from the mighty Indus.

2) THE HINDU PEOPLE.

Map 2 illustrates the main concentration of people of Hindu background. They are found predominantly in village settlements and in market towns where, although they may live alongside other peoples, they are kept - or manage to keep themselves - fairly socially distinct.

The concern of the research is with the position of these people and with one specific group in particular. Referred to by the Governments of both Pakistan and India as the Kutchi Koli, a Scheduled Caste, the people refer to themselves as "Koria". (Scheduled Caste is the present more polite term which is used to describe the former "Untouchable" or unclean castes.) The Kutchi were formerly nomadic but ascribe their roots to the Kutch area of Gujarat, in what is now India. They migrated in large numbers to Sind in pre-Partition times (as did many other Hindu tribal groups) - the first arriving approximately one hundred and fifty years ago and at subsequent periods of famine up until 1947. They laboured wherever they could get work- building canals, roads and walls. The canal irrigation system instigated by the British brought a great increase in the amount of cultivable land and later many Kutchi were hired as tenant farmers to rich landlords. With the advent of Partition, some fled back to India for fear of persecution by the Moslems. Others took their chance and stayed on in Pakistan where they considered themselves settled and relatively prosperous. The Kutchi Koli number around fifty thousand people in Sind at the present time.

Other Hindu groups important to this thesis for reference purposes are Marwari Bhil, Dhatki Bhil, Parkari Koli, Wadiyara Koli, Bhagri, Vagri, Meghvar and Bhangi. (See the notes at the end of the thesis.) The Kutchi Koli see themselves as being superior in caste terms to these groups. (Whether the latter see themselves in this inferior light is a dubious point.) Some Kutchi have been heard to admit that they are "lower" than Brahmans, - others reckon there is a relationship of equality. (There were no Brahmans in the area studied to permit dissension on this point, however.)

Moslems, both Sindi and Punjabi, were seen as being in a somewhat anomalous position by the Kutchi, being generally regarded with suspicion, but being recognised as possessing superior political and economic power since Partition. They are therefore, although denigrated in private, treated at least with surface respect in public. The Kutchi frequently lament their changing fortunes and reminisce about the times when Hindus were superior to Moslems, despite their own relatively inferior caste position as regards the other Hindus at that period. The Kutchi do not have very much contact with Moslems in the towns or cities. In the country, they tolerate each other, and have been seen in rare instances to accept each others' drinks - if not their food.

3) THE VILLAGE.

The village in which we lived is large by Kutchi standards. (See photograph 1) It is almost exclusively Kutchi Koli inhabited, the exceptions being a Bhil family living near the entrance gate, and employed as tenants to the village headman.

The nearest neighbouring village to the north is also inhabited by Kutchi Koli. A Bhil village lies further along the canal road. To the east of the host village is one recently settled by Sindi Moslems.

The peoples of the area prefer to live with their own kind. I have however visited villages which comprise several groups settled alongside each other, segregated by walls or hedges and often possessing separate water supplies. This arrangement is due to economic necessity - a landlord having land to work and tenants from perhaps diverse origins agreeing to work there. The village in which we lived was to some extent atypical, in that some of the villagers own their land and some others work for them instead of for Moslem landlords. The former came to be in this relatively fortunate position because of a land redistribution act under Ayub Khan, when the previous Hindu extensive landowner was divested of the property in favour of his

sitting tenants. Many of the poorer Kutchi at this time lost their shares to those more powerful in the village. This remains the cause of much resentment. Nevertheless, the villagers own the land upon which the village is built and this results in a stronger sense of security and stability than that experienced by many other Hindu groups and by other Kutchi Koli in Sind. For most, entitlement to dwelling place involves working the land of the appropriate landlord.

In addition to the Kutchi landowners, two related Moslem landlords possess land close to the village and employ some villagers as tenants.

a) THE LAYOUT.

The village is hedged on three sides by high thorn scrub. Behind the headman's house there is a small stretch of mud wall. There is one entrance to the south over a mud and timber bridge. Beneath this flows a narrow irrigation channel from the east. A mud track skirts the village's western boundary before joining the larger canal route, and far beyond that the main Hyderabad / Mirpurkhas road. (See map3)

Houses are generally built facing to the south or the east. Most of the village houses are of mud and dung construction with timber and reed thatch roof. The only exception to this is one made of bricks loosely placed together and inhabited by one of the landowners, who is also a bhagat (religious leader). The roofs are raised above the walls by approximately six inches to one foot, to let in light, to let out smoke, and to prevent white ants from eating through the timber.

A few of the houses have small port-hole type windows. Doors can be made of slatted wood, sturdy timber or metal - depending upon the wealth of the householder. In the right front corner and on the same wall as the door, there is generally a mud hearth. This is divided into two sections of different sizes, the left for the cooking of the rotlo (unleavened bread pancake), the right for the curry, tea or rice pot.

All houses also have an uthak - an external mud and dung verandah under lighter thatch. It is a focus for all kinds of social activity as it is cooler in the summer in the wind and warmer in the winter in the sun. The verandahs also possess hearths for summer cooking and for winter fires.

Depending upon individual family wealth possessions vary. Most families however own a bed, a wooden or tin trunk in which to store valuables, a container for flour, a wooden shelf, bed quilts, a rope on which to hang clothes, a water-pot, a bucket, a paraffin lamp, various farming implements, and various cooking utensils.

There are seven hand-pumps in the village which are owned by the respective rich individual householders who had them excavated. Barring animosity, neighbours are permitted to use them. Both in the village and throughout Sind their installation is on the increase. Many villages still have to rely solely on canal water however and others may possess only one hand-pump.

b) ANIMALS.

Buffalo, oxen, cows and goats are maintained in the village. The numbers owned per household are again dependent upon wealth. At night tethered to wooden stakes near the house, in shelters or in the village clearing; by day they are generally taken out of the village to work or graze.

In addition to these valued animals, dogs and cats also abound. Their existence is tolerated but they are frequently physically abused. Cats keep down the vermin and dogs afford the villagers a certain amount of protection. The dogs maintain their own territories within the village which they guard jealously. They scavenge and are also fed scraps from specific households. All the dogs will unite against strange external elements, either in the shape of people or animals and will attack ferociously if not prevented by the villagers. They are

frequently beaten by the villagers if, for example, they stray too near the house area. However, the villagers also realise their importance in a locality where gangs of thieves are plentiful and where lawlessness and self-defence prevail.

c) AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

The crops grown reflect the climate and commercial interests. Cotton is grown as a cash crop and is harvested in the autumn. Wheat is the staple, grown in quantity and retained for the year's consumption - any surplus being traded or sold. It is harvested in the hot season. Onions are grown as a cash crop in the winter and various other vegetables are grown during the year dependent upon landlords' wishes and market demand. Chilli peppers were important in the host village, being harvested at the beginning of the wet season. Other villages in the area grew sugar cane, bananas, garlic, or tomatoes at their respective landlord's instigation. In addition fodder is grown for the animals.

d) POPULATION.

The village in which research was conducted comprises twenty-six Kutchi households - over two hundred people, including children. This can be broken down into sex and age categories - seventy-eight adults, (thirty-six men and their wives, five widows, one separated old woman), the remainder being unmarried boys and girls.

Throughout the twenty-month fieldwork period actual numbers varied only slightly. The sole significant increase was within the Bhil family. In October 1980 one old couple were settled there. By June 1982 they had brought younger family members to live with them - sons and their wives, daughters and their husbands - bringing the total to six adults and six children.

Despite numbers altering insignificantly amongst the Kutchi there were of course the usual internal changes - newly married women leaving to live virilocally, new wives moving in, less established families moving to land elsewhere, village daughters bringing husbands to work on their father's land, babies being born, and a young widow remarrying. A basic core of older, more influential village men and their families remained stable however. (See map 3)

The old and much respected village headman, Rama, died of tuberculosis in late 1977. His brother Bharat (one hundred acres) replaced him as headman, although he is not as popular. Two other brothers remain in the village, both important in their own right, as landlords and bhagat (religious leaders) - Satruga (fifty acres) and Lakshman (sixteen acres). These three men own a large proportion of the land, as do Rhadu and his three brothers - sons of the old headman. The first-mentioned three brothers also have their sons living in the village with their respective families. The men are members of the Akiyani zach (patrilineage), the largest in the village. Some Akiyani women have also remained in the village, their husbands living with them. There is the old headman's daughter Ratani married to Lavi, and Lakshman bhagat's daughter. Lakshman's wife's younger brothers - Nilo and Manoo - also live there with their families. Members of the Zendariya zach - three brothers - have also settled because of the youngest brother's sister-exchange with Lavi's brother, Manzi. (See genealogies)

The northern-most row of house-dwellers in the village is composed almost exclusively of persons either directly or affinally related to an old woman by the name of Zati. Her late husband was also of the Akiyani zach, his brother being the old headman's father. Through him she inherited some land. The land is held in the name of her husband's brother's son's son - Rano, and is worked by him and Ramshi - her second daughter's husband. Mothi, Rano's elder brother has sixteen acres of land given at the time of distribution. His wife's brother, Zavo, is married to Haku, Zati's third daughter in a sister-exchange.

Zavo's eldest brother, Viro, is married to Zati's eldest daughter, Baya. Viro lost his land to Satruga at the time of distribution through deceit.

Zati's youngest daughter Mali, with whom she lives, is married to one of the richest men in the village, and the only man who does not work there. Arjan is a welder in Hyderabad and travels to work on his motorbike. His mother lives with them, her husband (not Arjan's father) having left her. Arjan made arrangements for his elder brother Lakshman (Adihara zach) to come and work the land of one of the Moslem landlords - Rice Iniat. His sister Gori also used to live with her husband and children in the neighbouring house. Three years earlier Arjan and Lakshman arranged for their mother's brother, Sahadeva, to settle in their village hamlet. He is an old man who makes charcoal to sell in town.

We lived with Arjan and his family for the first three months of the research. Subsequently Devo, Arjan's sister's husband decided to go and work for a reputedly better landlord and so we were able to move into the house they had vacated.

Kanu and family, the only other unrelated Kutchi Koli members of the village are living there because the headman employs Kanu to drive the former's newly acquired tractor.

4) KINSHIP

The Kutchi Koli are theoretically patrilineal and patrilocal. (As we have already seen, there are however exceptions to the latter rule.) Every Kutchi is born into an exogamous patrilineage called a zach. Each zach has its own name and certain rules and rituals associated with its deity. There are very many zach within the Kutchi Koli people. Estimates from them vary between fifty and one hundred but no-one really knows.

Marriages are arranged by fathers and intermediaries - the latter generally related either through kinship or through affinity to both parties. Prior to the ceremony, the couple have never seen each other. This, in practice, necessitates village exogamy, although the marriage rules are not expressed in these terms. They adhere to the sapinda rule, as it is commonly known in north India, which dictates that marriage/sexual intercourse is prohibited with kinsfolk up to and including the seventh degree on the male side. This forms the basis of their marriage rules, although more ideally than in practice.

Zach membership is however important and Kutchi Koli are defined by one another in relation to this. It is a source of pride, group loyalty and solidarity. These notions vary in degree, but are ever-present.

As has been seen above, the numerically preponderant zach in the studied village is that of the Akiyani, who possess most of the land and power. Most of the other inhabitants are related to them affinally. Because of the possibility of land ownership in the village, it is probable that more frequent uxorilocal marriages have occurred than is the norm amongst the Kutchi. Residence is based upon kinship, with men belonging to the same zach generally sharing a hamlet.

5) RELIGION

The villagers refer to themselves as Hindu people. In this respect they oppose themselves to the Moslem majority and this is seen by them as important. They formally accept that the other Scheduled Castes of Sind are also Hindu people but in practice they do not consider the similarities. They follow the doctrine of Bhakti (salvation from sin through works of devotion to Ishvar, the supreme deity), which has been particularly influential throughout the area since the nineteen thirties.

Christian missionary activity a few years ago resulted in seven families being baptised. These families were all related directly to Arjan and his wife and his resultant influence in this must have been great. He had been a Christian for many years - the son of a tribal evangelist, he had received his education and welding training at a Christian hostel. He attributes his success in life to such beginnings and wanted his wife and her family members from the village to share in this belief. Arjan is called by his Christian name, Samuel, at work in Hyderabad, and only his employer there knows that he comes from a Hindu background. (Although Christians are looked down upon by the Moslems in Pakistan, Hindus are in a generally worse position.)

The conversions of the other families, for the most part, did not involve a basic change of belief, but the addition of certain acceptable Christian concepts to their original doctrines. Many became baptised in the hope of material gain, or to please Arjan - the richest, most influential man in the hamlet.

The Kutchi Koli Hindu practices are, in fact, changing fairly perceptibly towards more literate forms of expression. Importance is increasingly being attached to the reading of the Gita (Hindu Scriptures) in private devotion, and in life-cycle rituals, especially their funeral rites, which have undergone considerable change in recent years.

The main festivals recognised by the villagers are Hutani (Holi), Hachmo and Divari (Diwali). In popular conception they fit roughly into the annual calendar as denoting the commencement of the three seasons - Hutani in March as the start of the hot season; Hachmo in August at the start of the wet season; and Divari in November at the start of the cold. (These are only rough approximations as their calendar dates are reckoned according to the lunar months.)

6) CLOTHING

Hindu men are less easily distinguishable from Moslems than are their women. The majority of the men these days wear shalwar-chemise (long, wide shirt, with baggy trousers - Pakistani national dress). Older men mostly wear white or lighter shades, along with a white headcloth. Amongst the very elderly and very poor, the dhoti (loincloth) can occasionally be seen. Young men often sport shalwar-chemise suits as brightly coloured as those of Moslem men. Unless very old and poor, Hindu men do not have beards. In some groups the men wear one gold earring - this is not the case amongst the Kutchi Koli.

When accompanied by their womenfolk however, their caste is easily identifiable. Moslem women wear a form of shalwar-chemise, not radically different in shape from that of the men. Hindu women, in contrast, wear either sari or long skirts and blouses. Scheduled Caste women wear the latter and each group has its own specific style and pattern. Within this, a certain amount of difference in colour and patterning is permitted, but not a great deal. All Hindu Scheduled Caste girls have markings tatooed on their faces, necks and arms. The jewelry is also distinctive, in that bracelets are of a specific type according to ethnic group and so are the heavy forms of earrings - three dangling in a line from the top of the ear, and another different one inserted spool-like in a large hole in the lobe.

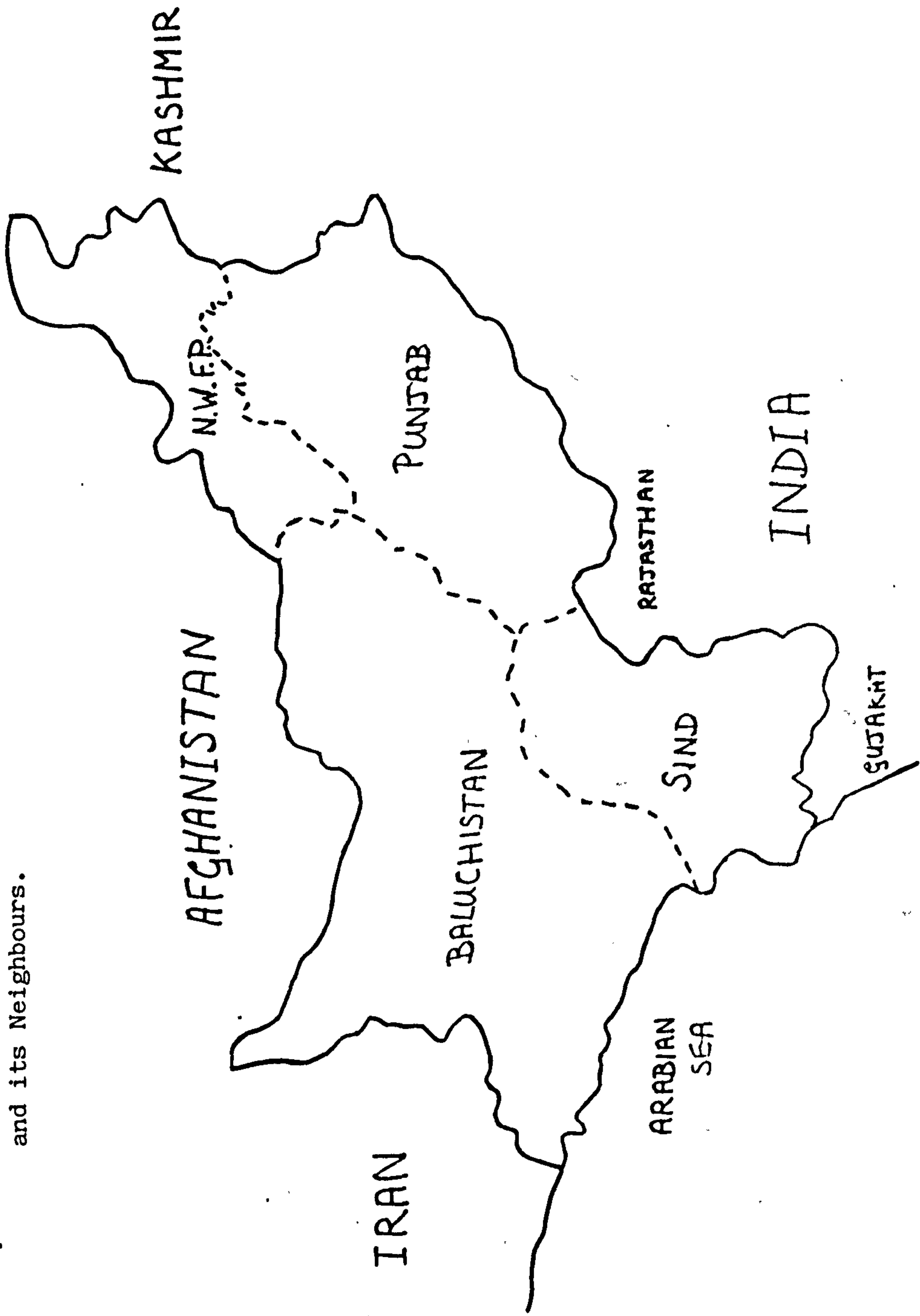
One of the most obvious distinguishing marks of a Kutchi Koli married woman is the wide silver bracelets - narrowing at the wrist, opening on hinges, fastened with a long pin, and the most essential part of her wedding jewelry. She will also be recognised by way of her skirt - long, gathered at the hips, comprising between twelve and fifteen yards of cloth. It must be made out of one of two fabrics - striped and shiny with a predominance of red, or purple cotton with flowers and a border at the foot. She will wear a backless blouse of two brightly contrasting colours, the breasts being emphasised by one of them. (See photograph 6) Her headcloth is often a sunari (large square of tie-dyed material, again with a preponderance of red and

being a specific Kutchi Koli type veil). In these ways she is immediately identifiable, not only in opposition to Moslem women and as distinct from the many other Hindu Scheduled Caste women in the locality, but also in terms of her marital status. Girls are dressed in another specific fashion, and widows go without jewelry and wear yet another ascribed set of clothes.

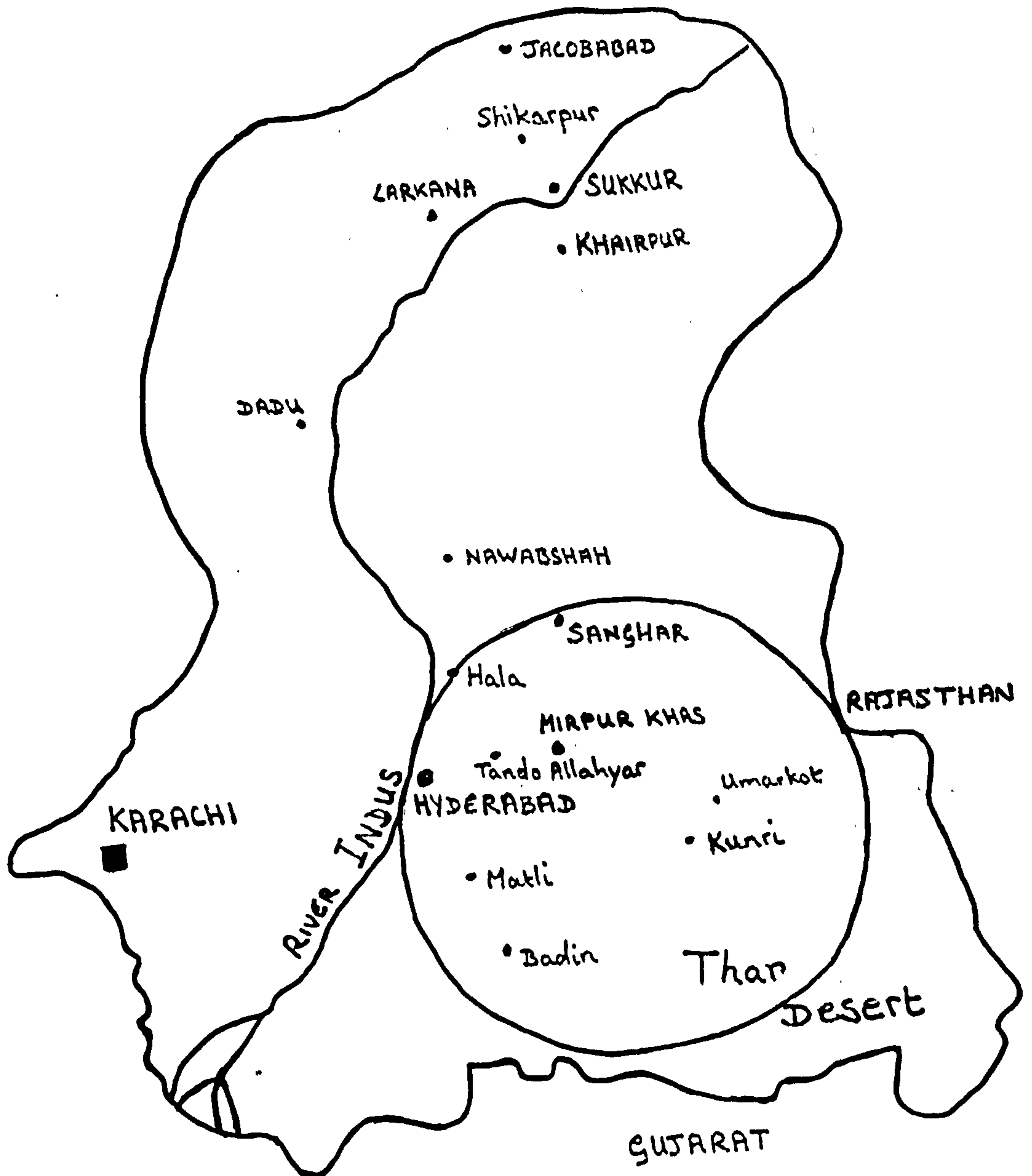
CONCLUSION.

In this short introductory section, we have gained an insight into the people with whom the research is concerned. We have looked at their history, language, occupation and beliefs. We have also focussed briefly upon the specific community amongst whom the study was made. All these aspects will be further elaborated upon in later chapters.

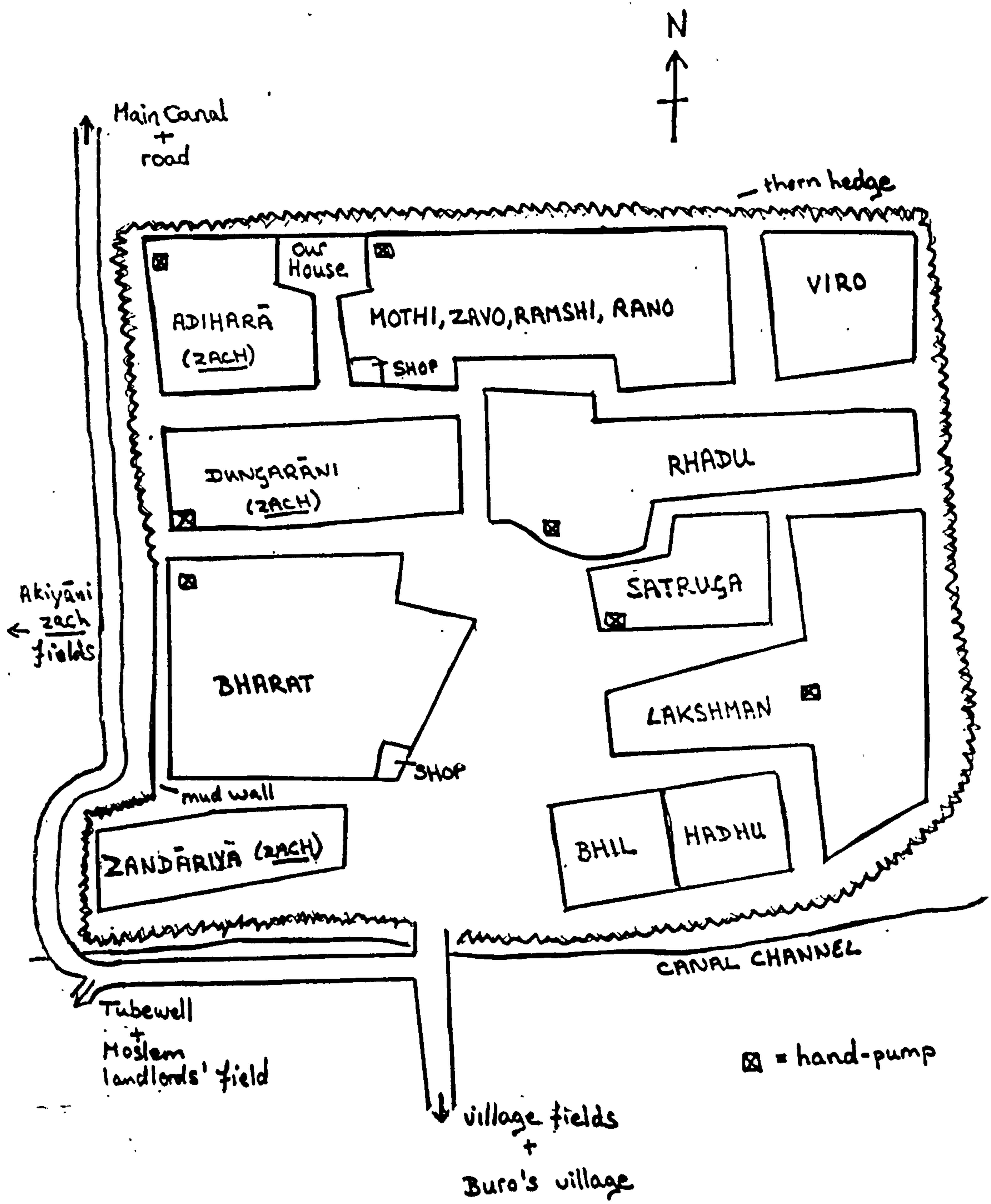
Map 1. Pakistan's Provinces
and its Neighbours.



Map 2. Sind; with main concentration of Hindu people located within circle.



Map 3. Sketch Map of the Village.



GENEALOGICAL CHARACTERS

Note. All names here and in the text are fictitious Kutchi Koli ones, to prevent anyone or all from embarrassment by this thesis.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Zati | 48. Baya |
| 2. Rama | 49. Hari |
| 3. Satruga | 50. Hadhu |
| 4. Lakshmi | 51. Lakshmi |
| 5. Bharat | 52. Narsing |
| 6. Buri | 53. Nila |
| 7. Lakshman | 54. Bozo |
| 8. Jari | 55. Moni |
| 9. Viro | 56. Karamshi |
| 10. Baya | 57. Hari |
| 11. Ramshi | 58. Nilo |
| 12. Zomi | 59. Bhaga |
| 13. Zavo | 60. Manoo |
| 14. Haku | 61. Zomi |
| 15. Arjan | 62. Raidan |
| 16. Mali | 63. Rami |
| 17. Mothi | 64. Keha |
| 18. Netha | 65. Zeti |
| 19. Buro | 66. Reti |
| 20. Shama | 67. Zatu |
| 21. Rano | 68. Sahadeva |
| 22. Chali | 69. Niri |
| 23. Dasrath | 70. Vihi |
| 24. Nila | 71. Lakshman |
| 26. Karam | 72. Zakal |
| 27. Buri | 73. Naru |
| 28. Lavi | 74. Jama |
| 29. Ratani | 75. Baya |
| 30. Manzi | 76. Shavo |
| 31. Mali | 77. Zati |
| 32. Pansa | 78. Buro |
| 33. Bhaga | 79. Ratani |
| 34. Chandar | 80. Karam |
| 35. Pansi | 81. Nena |
| 36. Devo | 82. Hadhu |
| 37. Gori | 83. Rani |
| 38. Pansa | 84. Khanu |
| 39. Jama | 85. Amuli |
| 40. Hadhu | 86. Nilo |
| 41. Rami | 87. Rami |
| 42. Rhadu | 88. Keha |
| 43. Niri | 89. Mali |
| 44. Zakal | 90. Ganga |
| 45. Dharamu | 91. Pansa |
| 46. Ratani | 92. Shasti |
| 47. Karam | 93. Parbhu |
| | 94. Visi |

Photographs I



1. The village

2. Men
binding field



3. Women
picking cotton

CHAPTER TWO:

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY.

- 1) The Problem.
- 2) The Methodology.
- 3) The Literature.
 - a) The People.
 - b) The Ideas.
 - c) The Women.
- Conclusion.

1) THE PROBLEM.

The ethnographic problem to be considered here is the female perception of gender and caste identity amongst a group of Scheduled Caste Hindus in the Sind province of south-east Pakistan.

Anthropologists who have undertaken research into the position of women on the Indian sub-continent, have generally presumed a woman's perception of caste to be essentially similar to that of her father or husband. Female values are therefore assumed to conform to those made explicit by the male caste members. Women of upper castes, who lead secluded existences, undertake less external labour and are more subordinate to their menfolk, are thus reported to feel that their high caste status and associated prestige outweighs any gender oppression and compensates for it. (See Mandelbaum 1972, Jacobson 1977, Jeffery 1979, Sharma 1980.) Observers in this way justify the women's position and response to it by external so-called "objective"

views of their material situation - armed with a model which appeals to our sense of rationality.

Due to the socio-economic situation of present-day Sind, however, the women of the group studied lead relatively secluded existences but are not considered to be of high caste. The Hinduism of the total group can be seen to be encapsulated and threatened by the Moslem majority. The following questions therefore merit consideration:

How is caste itself affected in such a situation? How do the women react to their enclosed and segregated position with no apparent status advantages? May the men have a different world-view because of their access to external society? In such a context, may it indeed be theoretically dangerous to presume that both sexes will live within the confines of a shared ideological, economic and social domain?

This thesis seeks to examine Kutchi Koli women's own models of gender, caste and social change. In so doing, it perhaps challenges our anthropological models which tend to devalue women by implicitly subscribing to the dominant male mode of societal interpretation.

Firstly, however, I must chart my own intellectual and emotional journey during fieldwork, to illustrate why I found earlier models so unsatisfactory and how I came independently to a position since substantiated by a growing body of anthropological literature. (See MacCormack and Strathern (eds.) 1980 and Ardener, S. (ed.) 1981.)

2) THE METHODOLOGY.

Before leaving for Pakistan, I spent several months between 1978 and 1979, reading about the anthropology of food and its application to Hindu notions of personal purity and sexuality. I wrote a research proposal. I stated "the problem", and the methodology I would employ to tackle it. That document, however, proved overwhelmingly irrelevant in the field.

Nevertheless, apparently intellectually armed to face fieldwork, John Young (my husband, also undertaking a PhD in Social Anthropology), and I departed. He had been to the village before and knew what to expect. I did not. Yet, perhaps I exaggerate. The countryside of Sind and the visible lives of the people were in no way alien or even unexpected. Photographs, novels, television documentaries, John's descriptions had anticipated all this.

With my first sights and experiences, I was excited, eager. Watching from the "outside", I began to think of myself as an anthropologist. This was when everything would become relevant. Intoxicated by the received ideas of "finding oneself" in fieldwork, of returning full of new thoughts, information, theories, at this stage the high, bright, desert sky seemed the limit.

As in the beginning of Malinowski's diary (1967:23), the scenery and landscape intrigued - being different; being colourful. The people merged as part of the background - necessary, unthreatening, basically irrelevant. One might notice clothes, jewelry, tools - anthropological artifacts worthy of note and later questioning. Still however, one was part of one's own world, one's own cosmology, one's own value-system. This strengthened and supported, this encouraged and validated. It was therefore a matter of external questioning, not internal; an objectification of imperceived reality; structuring what one could not comprehend.

Before long however, the gloss wore off and we were struggling - for confirmation, for consensus, for a shared belief, even in the mundane. John and I were perhaps fortunate, having each other. Nevertheless the world of real people impinged, forced itself upon us. Can two people maintain a world-view? We were not supposed even to have this impulse. Therefore, why did we? Perhaps we were racist? Yet, it was not a matter of colour but because they were so completely different. This led to struggling to reaffirm one's own culture, one's own way of performing basic tasks - carrying loads,

washing clothes, defecating, singing. "They" did not understand. But why should they? Our role was to try to understand them and we could not. Actually, they were probably trying more than us. We were the ones feeling threatened, attempting to erect boundaries around ourselves - our space, our front-door, our time, our work, our self-importance.

"After a while things will improve," echoed from the past, as I physically settled - without the slightest anticipation of enjoying "the fieldwork experience." Letters, as for Malinowski, were a life-line, a contact from another world whose interests and values became of decreasing relevance and import.

Slowly, I began to communicate in their language. I believed I had found understanding at last. Immediately, many small things slipped into place and language was able to validate previous intuitive and emotional hunches. The world began to have structure again; a transformed one - not totally - but slightly twisted. Questioning became exciting, a challenge once more. Answers were noted with urgency and enthusiasm, instead of with apathy. In a return to the beginning, I again felt an anthropologist at work: capable, cool, collected, at ease with my surroundings, secure in my relationships.

Yet understanding, like language, came in waves. One travelled so far, then no further, and one encountered a blank wall again. Something that seemed firm, secure and organised, disappeared and the structures melted away. The cause may have been insufficient language, insufficient relationship, insufficient understanding. I was not however completely back at the beginning. It was more a series of steps or levels. For every two steps one ascended, one always descended a step. (This implies a positivist approach - that one will get there in the end. One will not, as I discuss shortly, but one must probably go through the motions at least of believing it - or one will not start at all.)

At various stages, I tried to re-analyse my situation, and redefine my position within their culture. What was I doing there anyway? "The

problem", about food and its sexual associations came to nothing amongst these Hindus. It was not important to them and I would never have been able to construct a thesis with such an absence of data. Which of these reasons was more important to me? My own values and assumptions fluctuated and changed direction as frequently as I suffered from dysentery.

With language and the acquisition of certain Kutchi values and customs, I found myself increasingly involved with the women. No longer was it possible to flit from group to group, trying to learn about, and make friends in both worlds. It was not the men who objected, but the women, who relatively quickly made it plain what was expected of me and the positive rewards of conformity. Disobedient or anomalous behaviour was punished with ridicule, stern faces, or a refusal to communicate until repentance was shown.

Some of this may have stemmed from the fact that John had previously undertaken a few months of fieldwork in the village. He had been accepted as a young, unmarried man, and had a role within the social structure. When he returned with wife, I was therefore given an associated and corresponding status, and two "mothers-in-law" in the family with whom we initially lived.

In this respect, I found my situation to be startlingly similar to that described by Pettigrew amongst Sikhs.

As part of a Jat family, I had a role, a position, a status assigned to me from the beginning of my fieldwork. Instant socialisation was expected of me. I had been accepted into the family as a young wife, so I was expected to follow a wife's pattern of behaviour, and conform also to the rules of rural Jat society. Being a member of a family at once placed me within a wide range of relationships in the society too, all of which, when I did not behave as a Jat woman, were bent on teaching me how. I had to quickly give up any resistance to covering my head, partially veiling my face, covering the tops of my arms etc. If I had failed to comply with these customs a lack of sympathy would certainly have developed on the part of those among whom I lived. (Pettigrew 1981:71)

Again, as did Pettigrew, I found that I was subject to more and more inhibitions in terms of the male members of the society. I

developed an increasing sense of modesty, shyness and propriety. This was reflected in dress, speech patterns, seating and walking arrangements. Things I at first did naturally, later shocked me. Implications for the research were therefore profound. I could not travel to neighbouring villages without either my husband or a group of Kutchi (comprising women). I could not initiate conversations with men. Any communication with male societal members necessitated my husband as intermediary. He therefore had to be well-briefed beforehand as to the subjects upon which I required information. Any further prompting from me had to be muttered from behind the veil, as it is out of place for a wife to speak before her husband and for him to acknowledge explicitly her existence. These measures were not only relevant for me. My presence was required whenever my husband wanted to speak with the women. Although he could address them directly, any answers were channelled through me.

All this of course had to be learnt and had to be unlearnt once back in Britain. I would stress that this learning process is probably similar to that experienced by most anthropologists as they adapt themselves to various cultures throughout the world. For a woman in this type of society however, the change is fairly fundamental.

Here I would emphasise that the necessary traumatic adaptation probably prejudices our view of the women of enclosed societies. The cultural norms are so alien to us, that we perhaps foist inhibitions and feelings of oppression on to our informants. These women, who have no access to an alternative world-view, may experience no such feelings of alienation and exploitation. To them, this is life for women, and anything else would be unthinkable. To posit a low self-esteem on their behalf would be to devalue them unnecessarily.

After some time in the village, I began to find the lives of these women intriguing. They had their own, very different, way of looking at things. They were proud of their group's customs and rituals. Encapsulated from the outside world, they maintained different attitudes from their menfolk.

Here I found a theoretical problem however. How was I to explain such a sense of pride and group-esteem? Surely these women were exploited, oppressed and subordinate? Which of our existing anthropological models could explain their conceptions of reality; an independent world-view, a devaluation of many male "superior" attributes, and of those of the outside world?

I decided that my most valid course of action would be to try and translate and interpret this world-view of Kutchi women. Perhaps later I would be able to find an intellectual explanation to cope with the unexpected data I was receiving. (Note: all quotes in the ethnographic text are from women, unless otherwise specified.)

At this stage, I want to emphasise the basic problems of the anthropological fieldworker in the translation of experience from culture to culture and the personal aspects of the role of intermediary. If the intermediary is in good, receptive, sensitive mood, she/he may pick up all sorts of nuances of meaning, and encouraged and stimulated be able to apply them to more and more beliefs and situations. If, on the other hand, the anthropologist is in a bad, insensitive or vulnerable mood, this will be sensed immediately by friends/informants, who will in turn withdraw, put up a wall, or plead ignorance in the hope of terminating the conversation. We must all have experienced such times. This is where sentiment enters into fieldwork and I feel that it has as much of an influence upon data as the much-bemoaned pre-conceived values we all carry with us.

How much can we see certain kinds of our data affected by the mood of the time - frustration, boredom, lack of mail or personality clash? Are there not certain stages where the information flows because of the fieldworker's inner well-being, or conversely, ceases for reasons other than language, barriers to external understanding or theoretical problems?

As Malinowski stated towards the end of his diary, with a great deal of fieldwork experience behind him.

At Kudukway Keda, there was a moment of embarrassment when I sat among niggers and did not know where to begin. (Malinowski 1967:216)

Evans-Pritchard states in his introduction to The Nuer.

A man must judge his labours by the obstacles he has overcome, and the hardships he has endured, and by these standards I am not ashamed of the results. (Evans-Pritchard 1940:9)

Therefore, there may be many basic problems for the fieldworker as intermediary to prevent him/her from obtaining the desired "knowledge".

Understanding their experience, trying to enter it, then attempting to render it comprehensible to outsiders are all levels to be achieved. This cross-cultural translation can be difficult and eluding, and has been tackled in many different ways. At best it is probably no better than an approximation; at worst it can be a misfit or do actual damage.

Any linguist will say that in a translation something is "lost". In the passage from Kutchi native experience to western intellectual thought, these translations have taken place several times. We can trace the chain in this way: from a) Kutchi female thought, into b) Kutchi female translation of own concepts in order to respond to the anthropologist's enquiries, through c) language/cultural differences and difficulties, into d) what the anthropologist understands of what the informant is saying about his/her world, into e) into the anthropologist's "domestic" language, into f) the language of structured paper and scholarly debate of the academic world.

The constraints we experience in organising the collected data are perhaps a problem intrinsic to our discipline, with no apparent solution. Leach describes Malinowski's response to his Trobriand data.

Trobriand culture as a whole, does not exist. It is not something that can be reported on by Trobrianders, it is something that has to be studied and constructed by the ethnographer. (Leach 1959:134)

Bourdieu, on the other hand, thinks that ethnographers do too much constructing and enforcing of strange categories on to their informants. The very scholarliness of the approach, and the questioning, immediately alters the received information significantly.

A question as innocuous in appearance as, "And what comes next?", inviting an informant to situate two "periods" in relation to one another in continuous time (which does no more than state what the genealogical or chronological diagram does implicitly), has the effect of imposing an attitude to temporality which is the exact opposite of the attitude involved practically in the ordinary use of temporal terms. Quite apart from the form which the questioning must take so as to elicit an ordered sequence of answers, everything about the enquiry relationship itself betrays the interrogator's "theoretical" (i.e. "non- practical") disposition and invites the interogatee to adopt a quasi- theoretical attitude: the situation in which the interrogation is carried on rules out any reference to the use and conditions of use of the temporal guide- marks; the interrogation itself tacitly substitutes for discontinuous marks, intended to be used for practical ends, the calendar as an object of thought, predisposed to become an object of discourse and to be unfolded as a totality existing beyond its "applications" and independently of the needs and interests of its users. (Bourdieu 1977:105-106)

I encountered a similar methodological problem at the beginning of fieldwork, whenever I took out a pen and paper to note anything down. The women especially found this very disturbing, shying away from this alien and threatening form. In a society where only very few of the men were literate, my own literacy distorted and opposed my communication with the women. I ceased writing in their presence and learned to confide more to memory until later.

Fieldwork amongst women had its own specific problems in this culture. They found it difficult to express themselves in our terms in response to direct questioning and had little confidence in their own capabilities and answers in certain fields. They required the affirmation of the group, and if alone, would often refer me to someone older, richer or more "knowledgeable", or would advise me to ask my husband to ask someone male. This is an interesting point, concerning their felt ease in a group, as compared to the more individual life-styles of the

men. In mixed groups of family members sitting talking in the evenings after the day's work, all but the oldest women would be characterised by shyness and silence. Much of this stems from habit, and concepts of honour and deference. More generally, however, they are afraid of ridicule and contempt if they transgress boundaries into the male domain.

Only within a single gender group will women converse freely, and even here they will always give deference to older women. If men are present, women will rarely speak out, unless upon subjects of which they are very sure. A woman's voice could often be heard trailing away, as she appealed to a man present to give her opinion substance and validation. What appears at first to be an apologetic conversational stance on the part of the women however, later reveals itself more as a profound knowledge of propriety and place. They maintain their own essential views of reality - unquestioned within a female mode of thought.

Men have had much more practice in expressing themselves and their beliefs to the outside world and its inhabitants. If they possessed no direct knowledge of what was being asked, they would at least hazard a guess, to provide some type of solution. Women would generally refuse to do this, saying simply that they did not know. This stemmed from their more rigid idea of what was women's business and what was not; boundaries which they refused, usually, to transgress. Older women categorised in more of an asexual position were "better" in terms of western approaches to data, in that they possessed some experience of both sexual realms and could to an extent express themselves in a "male" mode.

In this, and in terms of my own position in the field, and as a female anthropologist, I am reminded of a quotation from J. Okely.

This dichotomy of knowledge is reflected in the sexist division of labour and knowledge in our society. Women are less inhibited about exploring and expressing the personal element, although they are expected to apologise for this in academic debate. Women are more likely to comprehend a theory through an example or image whereas men will grasp a theory through generalisation; given the different upbringings of

males and females and the exclusion of women from direct economic and political power, only indirectly obtainable through personal relations with individual men, it is not surprising that the consequences are expressed in mode of thought. (Okely 1975:173)

One goes to the field armed with questions and unconscious expectations of at least the form the answers will take. When the responses of non-literate women do not conform to these categories, one has to alter drastically one's own approach or dismiss the responses themselves as irrelevant, (see also Ardener, E. 1975).

I perceived my own methodological priorities as being those of a somewhat silent participant observer. I found it better just to be amongst them; to soak up their conversation and attitudes and not to force extraneous issues. Most of what was important to them was implicit and could not be elicited by direct questioning. I felt that my only validity would be to try and share their experience as much as possible and not to inflict my own. Thus, information came by way of feelings as much as words. A sentiment was shared in its social context, and in some measure understood. I then had the problem of expressing it in words - my words, from a voiceless experience. I learned to have feelings about how things were rather than an analysis. This may appear controversial, but I am talking of the necessity of understanding a mood, an atmosphere. For example, the presentation of details of a ritual does not show the way in which the people perform it - enthusiastically, apathetically, conscientiously, haphazardly; it is the sentiment which gives meaning to the situation.

All this of course implies a development of relationships and mutual trust - aiming higher than a partial understanding devoid of context. In this respect, things are discovered which would have seemed inconceivable at the start. Questions of a private nature can be asked, which would previously have been ignored, avoided, or lied about. Superficial, curt, early responses can be expanded upon, drawn out, or found to be total fabrications. One of the most rewarding experiences of fieldwork must be this building up of friendship, trust and confidence, so that people will speak freely in front of you, or will

take the trouble to return to an issue to make sure that you understand properly what they are saying. Some social areas of course, require more trust and patience than others. People will talk immediately about day-to-day things which they see as having little importance or consequence. Later experiences are more rewarding both personally and as a researcher, and probably compensate for the difficult, tearful times.

I have catalogued the progression of my attitudes and work in the field, because in Pettigrew's words,

All fieldworkers should feel justified in exploring their experiences and encounters in the field for, to the extent in which they have moved in rhythm with, touched the spontaneity of, and been near to and free with those among whom they lived, they have experienced the entry of another culture and another set of values into their own being. (Pettigrew 1981:78)

I left the field much nearer to my goal - in terms of social facts learned, symbols comprehended, aspects experienced - yet there remained much to be understood. No doubt for every anthropologist this is the case. We can experience so far, and then no further. The next important methodological stage then, is making the translation into our native categories.

It is perhaps not surprising that at first I found it impossible to write in anything but an emotional way. I was still bound up with strong images, relationships and experiences, and it was only the vividness and life of the place which my pen could portray. The data were too extensive, and involved the people as people and therefore friends and foes, rather than inanimate academic objects. Key players in the thesis they surely are, but forcing them into moulds and structures at the beginning was more or less impossible.

Gradually, of course, this wears off, and later one can abstract and theorise much more. This is no doubt better in terms of anthropology, but perhaps one has already lost something in terms of the understanding and sharing of their experience.

The same problem I felt reared its head when organising the fieldwork data into the specific theoretical problems of the thesis. My theoretical interests and explanations seem rather arbitrary in terms of their lives. By our very pens, we impose our types of structures. Shifting their categories and world-view in some measure into ours, creates conformity and certain loss. My emphases may well not be theirs. The data of the thesis must stand on my claim that it is not my form of proof that I am trying to illustrate, but what I feel was the most accurate representation of where I felt them to be at that particular time of their lives.

The above discussion basically centres upon interpretation. Whether one considers anthropology as science or art depends to a great extent upon one's definitions, and I am not exploring definitional semantics here. I am not saying that in anthropology it does not matter what you say, providing that you say it well. Nor am I saying that we can gain social laws of a scientific nature applicable wherever A or B or Z are in conjunction. We cannot report facts, only what we see as facts. We cannot be truly objective, because we must look at everything in terms of our own subjectivity. We retain obvious prejudices and assumptions. To claim objectivity for anthropology is neither being honest to the practitioners or their "subjects".

Interpretation will vary with the background of the researcher, the language, the age, the paradigm she/he happens to be working in. But through description and translation, as best we are able, we can perhaps produce a document which shows the interrelationship of people and researcher; an image of a different world; a world that is the conjunction of at least two modes of thought. Through this, and through an admitted realisation of its limitations, we can ensure that social anthropology remains a living, adaptable discipline, which adds to the learning process about other cultures, and does not detract from this goal.

We can therefore perhaps observe tendencies rather than laws, and draw conclusions which are later re-analysable by others. This may be

false consciousness. Hopefully however, it is neither hypocritical or self-indulgent, as despite the impossibility of being totally objective, we must still retain an external, definable viewpoint, or else fail in all our endeavours.

3) THE LITERATURE

The caste ideology, which has rightly been assumed as encompassing the society of the Indian sub-continent, has perhaps been more pervasive than we would at first imagine. The tendency is to believe that social insights applicable to the Indian sub-continent are almost intrinsically inapplicable elsewhere, because of the very "nature" of the society in question.

The very existence of caste has perhaps placed Indian Social Anthropology upon an advantageous rung of the hierarchical ladder, partly because of the immense area and numbers covered and the encompassing nature of the belief system, but also because of the supposed literate and historical substantiation of the ideology. Thus, the Indian peasant can (apparently) be seen to be far removed from his/her counterpart in South America, France or Malaysia. Perhaps, as in other fields in our discipline, the differences are too exaggerated, and the associated gulf becomes too wide to cross comparatively.

We must at our peril however preclude the possibility of theoretical insights from other fields being productive in the interpretation of our "Indian" data. My debt to many who have not worked on the Indian sub-continent has been enormous, as will be evident within the pages of this thesis.

a) THE PEOPLE

Anthropological knowledge of the Sind area of Pakistan is virtually non-existent. Most research has focussed upon the mountain regions to the north, or on Punjab province. There has been more in India - across the border in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan - but even here there has been little work undertaken in the most westerly parts, near the Pakistani border. Published knowledge of the Hindu groups in these areas does not exist for Pakistan, and is sparse in the Indian case.

There are however, over a million people of Hindu background who are resident in Sind, and who speak numerous languages and dialects. Most of these people originate from what are now the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and came to Sind during the last one hundred and fifty years looking for work or for food at times of famine in the past. Many were attracted to the area when the British ordered the construction of irrigation canals. They provided labour for these, and later remained to reap the benefits of the more fertile land. The majority of them now work as share-croppers for Moslem landlords.

These people, of whom Bhil and Koli comprise the majority, are found throughout Sind and in southern Punjab. However, their main concentration is in lower Sind, east of the river Indus and towards the Thar desert. The languages of these people are unwritten, and although the people feature on Pakistani Government Census reports as being of Scheduled Caste, they receive no official interest or recognition, and there is also no specific information as to their respective numbers or occupations.

The Koli and Bhil groups are sub-divided according to place of origin. This is reflected in their names, dialects, style of dress and customs. These distinct groups conform to a hierarchical ranking system, and laws of caste are also seen to operate in terms of endogamy and commensality.

In India, the state of knowledge about Koli and Bhil groups is somewhat better, but there still remains some confusion, and appeals have been made for the furtherance of research in these areas. Bageshwar Singh calls for this in his article, "The Bhil are not a single tribal whole." (1981.)

Shah describes the situation thus,

Kolis co-existed in the highlands with tribes such as the Bhils, so much so that today many high caste Gujaratis confuse them with Bhils, as did the early ethnographers. Unfortunately, although the Kolis are an important element in Gujarat's population, their earlier ethnography is confusing, and there is hardly any modern, systematic, anthropological, sociological or historical study so that the confusion continues to persist. (Shah 1982:12)

Shah has found historical references to the political activities of Koli chieftains from the fifteenth century onwards. The ruling elite then described them as robbers, dacoits, marauders, predators and similar unsavoury characters. Russell in 1916 says,

In Nimat the Kolis, like the Bhils, made a trade of plunder and dacoity during the unsettled times of the eighteenth century, and the phrase "Nahal, Bhil, Koli", is commonly used in the old Marathi documents to designate the hill robbers as a class. (Russell 1916:533)

Certainly, according to Breman, the Kolis were regarded as "aboriginals of the plains", in the early days of colonial rule. (Breman 1974:30).

However, Shah says that by then a considerable number of Koli chieftains had managed to establish petty chiefdoms, composed of one, and occasionally more than one village, in all parts of Gujarat.

They adopted Rajput customs and traditions, claimed Rajput status, and gave daughters in marriage to Rajputs in the lower rungs of the Rajput hierarchy. They also continued to have marital relations with their own folk. Thus, finding any boundary between Rajput and Koli in the horizontal context was impossible, although there were sharp boundaries between the two in the narrow local context. (Shah 1982:13)

However, he continues,

The chiefly families constituted a tiny proportion of the total population of any second order division amongst the Kolis. The bulk of the population was spread all over the villages as small landholders, tenants and labourers. This bulk also was characterised by hierarchy, with the relatively advanced population living in the plains at one end and the backward population living along with the tribal population in the highlands at the other end. (Ibid.:13)

Breman, looking at the origin claims, also deals with their status and the attitudes of others towards them.

As a rule, the groups with a tribal background regard themselves as rajputs and try to substantiate their claim to this status by genealogical myths. Members of high castes put much stress on the deviating norms and customs of adivasis (collective name of tribal groups and castes), for instance in family life and religion without nowadays meaning to exclude them from Hindu society. The term of adivasis is here synonymous with low social status, it implies a pattern of behaviour which is inferior to that of the higher castes. "Tribal caste" seems the most suitable name for these groups, which are placed below the artisans and above the impure castes in the hierarchy (Breman. 1974:31)

As for occupation, Breman states that the Koli were mentioned as sharecroppers and agricultural labourers in the employ of Anavil Brahmans in Gujarat as long ago as the mid-nineteenth century.

As to location however, they are not solely to be found in Gujarat. Ghurye describes their presence to be,

"...spread over from Saurashtra, through Gujarat down the coast through Thana and Kolaba districts and over the Ghats through Khandesh, Nasik, Ahmednagar, to the southern and western talukas of the Poona district." (Ghurye 1963:1)

Although still largely sharecroppers and agricultural labourers, Koli in some parts of India appear to be regarded as an ascending caste, according to Breman for south Gujarat. Parry finds in the Kangra Hills area that their status is variable, and has the possibility of manipulation in relation to higher and lower castes, (Parry 1970). This has been facilitated by increased access to education and to other forms of employment, which have been taken up by younger members of the caste. Therefore although Parry refers to them as being of Untouchable, or Scheduled Caste, he says that they are at the top of

the status ladder for such "outside" groups, as they are not involved in polluting occupations. They are thus reported to be in the somewhat fortunate position of being able to gain Indian Scheduled Caste political advantage in some circumstances, whilst aspiring to more "clean" caste status in others, (Parry 1979).

In another location, Breman discusses part of the process in these terms,

In the process of differentiation that is taking place among the Kolis, those who are most successful try to utilize their stronger economic position to gain political power, by making their weaker fellow caste members feel obligated to them. (Breman 1974:167)

Yet a considerably different situation prevails for those Koli at present located in Sind, Pakistan. There is little access to education or to new patterns of employment. Most are found in their traditional agricultural roles - often impermanent in terms of landlord and location. Their position vis-a-vis the dominant Moslem majority is low, nor is there much possibility of manipulation in terms of the Hindu caste hierarchy as the higher castes are absent from Sind.

Pocock states that for India the term Koli is too loose and encompassing to provide any real sense of identity or meaning, either for insiders or outsiders, as it is,

".....found (to be used) all over western India for low-caste agriculturalists and agricultural labourers." (Pocock 1972:30)

This can be seen to be the case in Sind, Pakistan, where Koli are sub-divided on origin and caste principles, and no group has allegiance to any other on the grounds that they are all Koli. The only acknowledgement that they all hold in common is as Breman describes for Indian tribal castes, that they - "....firmly consider themselves Hindus." (Breman 1974:30)

Thus in Sind, there are the Kutchi Koli, ascribed in this way because of their reputed origins in the Rann of Kutch; the Parkari Koli from Nagar Parkar, now on the Indian border; the Tharadari Koli from the Thar desert and Rajasthan; the Wadiyara Koli from Gujarat; and the

Meyvasi Koli also from western Gujarat. Each group is endogamous and retains its own specific identity in terms of dialect, style of dress and jewelry, customs, rituals and commensal rules; basically that is, in terms of caste laws.

The data for this thesis derive from the Kutchi Koli, so referred to by others, their self-classification being that they are "Koria". They do not call other groups "Koria", but simply "Parkari", "Meyvasi", or "Tharadari". The Kutchi Koli consider themselves hierarchically purer than the other Hindu groups in Sind.

Bhil in Sind have similar divisions and caste distinctions. All Koli refer to them by the blanket term "Bhil" however.

These Hindu peoples maintain their conceptions of distinct identity and group purity, despite living alongside a Moslem majority who do not endorse such a belief-system. This involves social change amongst the minority groups in certain cultural areas. But there still exist dual social orders, which Madan recognises and states for the Kashmiri situation.

Hindus and Muslims differ in the images that they have of themselves, of each other, and of Kashmiri rural society. (Madan 1973:137)

He goes on to conclude that;

Instead of trying to completely assimilate the Muslim and Pandit representations of Kashmiri rural society, we should acknowledge the existence of dual social orders. Such a notion may turn out to be of value beyond the Kashmiri village in helping us to comprehend the situation of not only Muslims but also of other non-Hindu groups in South Asia (and, mutas mutandis, even of Hindus in such places as Sind in Pakistan. (Ibid.:139)

This thesis seeks to explore the position of one such group in Sind, seen predominantly from the female, internal viewpoint.

b) THE IDEAS

At this point, I will sketch a background of theoretical ideas about caste on the Indian sub-continent. It must be emphasised however, that this will be very brief and that it will only provide a general framework for the thesis. In a context where the values of caste can be seen to an extent to be changing amongst Kutchi men, caste ideas and distinctions for the female group have not lost their appeal. We must therefore have knowledge of this background to discover the means whereby the women maintain their own models. The means used may therefore be specific to this context, whereas the form of female response is hypothesised to be more widespread.

No-one who has had anything to do with the Indian sub-continent and the notion of caste could fail to acknowledge the immense contribution of Dumont to the interpretation of thought in these areas. By referring to caste as a "state of mind" and mode of thought, he has not only isolated fundamental facets of Indian thinking, he has also challenged our conceptualisation of that thought. (Dumont 1970:34)

He states that our previous difficulties in understanding the caste system stemmed from a failure to regard it in its totality. By its very nature it has the possibility of incorporating beliefs of apparent discrepancy and incompatibility. Thus, Hinduism can be seen to be based upon a narrow conceptual foundation, in terms of hierarchy and opposition, but it is associatedly broad in its application.

I submit that any general social ideology, any ideology that predominates in a given society is by its nature global, all-embracing, all-encompassing. This is true of the ideology of caste. (Ibid.:20)

For Dumont, purity and pollution are the central principles of caste ideology. Hierarchy is an important behavioural and conceptual consequence, which accommodates complementarity and does not imply equality. Division of labour and interdependence are two further behavioural consequences.

The conclusion is that the actual society is a totality made

up of two unequal but complementary parts. (Ibid.:93)

The opposition which he stresses is present everywhere is that between the pure and the impure. He is interested in the structure of the system - as one of relations rather than elements. Thus, it is a question of relative purity and impurity, and all at an intellectual rather than a fixed, immutable level.

There are many (things) which can be either pure, impure or neutral according to the circumstances. We are not dealing with a dichotomy in things but with an opposition in ideas. (Ibid.:20)

Dumont subsumes all Hindu belief, ritual and occupation under what he regards the fundamental opposition between the pure and the impure.

Belief, including belief in gods is only relative and subject to an overriding belief in the necessary co-existence of opposites, in the complementary relationship of pure and impure. The religion of gods is secondary; the religion of caste is fundamental. (Ibid.:34)

Thus, in Dumont's terms, if such is the fundamental state of mind, a change in reference point should not matter. The concern remains the opposition, and the relative values attached to appropriate levels of the hierarchy. Hypothetically, a Hindu Scheduled Caste in Sind will maintain its caste ideology and continue to define itself in opposition to those which it perceives as relatively pure or relatively impure, despite differing pragmatic circumstances. In this respect, Moslems can serve equally well as sweepers as exemplars of "low", and "superior" Scheduled Castes can serve as well as Brahmans as exemplars of "high".

Shah (1982) disagrees somewhat with Dumont in that he thinks that division is an important consequence competing with that of hierarchy and having equally fundamental implications. This, Shah says, is becoming increasingly evident in the urban setting, but was always an important aspect of the ideology, as earlier noted by Pocock in both India and East Africa, (Pocock 1957).

It is an integral part of this thesis that amongst a Hindu Scheduled Caste in Sind, distinctiveness, separateness, and difference, are

perceived to have as much importance as hierarchy.

Bougle has focussed on these differentiating principles within the ideology of Hinduism and the actual abhorrence contact evokes.

The caste system is an essentially religious institution. Sentiments of a religious nature sustain and maintain it: a kind of sacred horror, fear of committing a degrading sin, prevents the communion, mixing or contact of races, just as it hinders and delays changes of profession. (Bougle 1971:148)

In this quote, Bougle can be seen to bring in the moral element of the caste system, which Dumont has been criticised for neglecting, (Das and Uberoi 1971)

Srinivas (1952:31) uses a concept of social structure derived from Radcliffe-Brown. For him, caste consists of horizontal values shared with the same caste everywhere, and vertical values shared with other castes from the same locality (language, economics and politics being a few important examples of the latter).

Horizontal values can be seen to exist in the Kutchi context. But what are the implications for this society of the absence of vertical interdependence? Do the women accentuate differences in terms of caste, status, purity and pollution, more or less than the men?

Srinivas says that in an ideal system

Caste guarantees autonomy to a community, and at the same time it brings that community into relation with numerous other communities all going to form a hierarchy. (1952:31)

Now this may be true on a conceptual and ritual level in Sind, but there is no economic interdependence, which has been deemed to an extent necessary to the caste system. The situation therefore perhaps instead resembles that of distinct ethnic groups, which nevertheless maintain an ideology of purity and impurity.

The empirical symbiosis of caste, referred to as "the jajmani system", was emphasised by Wiser (1936), and Leach (1960). Here, jajmani relations within a locality were said to involve to some extent

a reciprocity of goods and services, and ritual complementarity. The whole was said to be comprised of diverse parts, each aware of its role within the structure and its relative importance, either economic or conceptual. Each caste was also conscious of its place, although its own definitions of appropriateness might differ from those ascribed to it.

The notion of "the jajmani system" as an analytical device, has been much criticised. Beidelman (1959) stresses the exploitative empirical situation. Pocock (1962) has questioned the applicability of the term to describe relations which are of a purely economic contractual nature. Srinivas shows that even in the classic caste situation, there is deviation from the ideal, when we look at the empirical level.

There is a certain discrepancy between the hierarchy as it is conceptualised by the people and as it exists in behaviour. Discrepancy is due to the fact that, in conceptualising the hierarchy, ritual considerations are dominant, while in the day-to-day relationships between castes economic, political, and "western" factors also play an important part. (Srinivas 1955b:26)

Parry also notes that, "if jajmani relations are conceptually central, they are economically peripheral" (1979:82). Dumont maintains however that although, "the jajmani system is not everything," (1970:108), and that money and wage labour have for a long time entered the picture, "one must not lose sight of the fact that they" (the jajman relation between caste and profession) "serve as a model for the others" (1970:107).

The situation in Sind is obviously very different from the traditional Indian model. The groups in the locality do not see themselves as part of a larger whole; at least if they do, the whole is elsewhere and intangible. There is no reciprocity between groups on an economic or ritual level; although its potential is symbolised in their rituals. The patron/client relationship exists, but is either within the group, or between the Scheduled Castes and an "outside" group of Moslem landlords. It is a purely economic contract and neither group have an overriding vision of a totality or interdependent whole. Is the maintenance of a caste ideology in Dumont's terms therefore possible in

such a situation?

Srinivas stresses the importance of the concept of varna to the caste system, in that it provides an all-India framework into which the myriad jati in any single linguistic area can be fitted. He defines jati as;

A very small endogamous group practising a traditional occupation and enjoying a certain amount of cultural, ritual and juridical autonomy. (1956:24)

The Kutchi term "zach" in its widest usage, corresponds to jati. In respect of Srinivas' definition, they are not however a small group and possess considerable autonomy in the last three areas.

The most useful theoretical insight Srinivas provides as regards this thesis is his concept of Sanskritization. His own use of the term has been both vague and variable, and there have been many criticisms. Nevertheless, I find the concept relevant to the thesis, provided that we view Sanskritization as a process, instead of focussing upon the Sanskritic values in themselves. Parry makes a similar use of the term in his analysis of up-casteing amongst the Koli in Kangra (1979:118). Srinivas himself says:

The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially in the middle regions of the hierarchy. (Srinivas 1952:30)

Basing his data upon the Coorgs of South India, he explains how this can be accomplished.

Sanskritization is the process by which a "low" Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, "twice-born" caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the dominant caste by the local community. The claim is usually made over a period of time, in fact, a generation or two, before the "arrival" is conceded. Occasionally, a caste claims a position which its neighbours are not willing to concede. (Srinivas 1966:6)

Ishwaran (1970) says that social mobility in a village is often tied to factors other than ritual escalation, and criticises Srinivas for being

To summarise - Dumont has made us focus upon the encompassing nature of the caste system, its hierarchical values, its strength at the level of ideology so that it does not require immutable attributes in terms of people and things. We can see that this may prove important in the Kutchi case, where there is no interdependent caste system, but where perhaps the ideology has remained constant.

We therefore looked at Shah and his emphasis upon distinctiveness, which may again prove relevant in the context of this research, as a means to illustrate conceptual separation.

We then looked at Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization and posed the question whether moral "betterment", or "rational" economic and political responses are deemed more relevant in the Kutchi case.

This thesis also suggests that the gender variable is important in such an analysis, once we take into account possible perceptual and practical differences.

c) THE WOMEN

At this point therefore, I will look at some of the ethnographic literature and theories as to woman's position on the Indian sub-continent. This can be seen as a base upon which much of my argument will rely. It must also however be seen as a starting point for the present research, which differs considerably in terms of ethnographic context.

There has been much documentation on the position of women in South Asia. There has however been nothing written on the position of women in Hindu Scheduled Castes in Pakistan. Consequently, from the extensive and more general female literature, I only survey here that which I found specifically relevant to the thesis.

An initial practice which commands the attention of westerners with regard to women on the Indian sub-continent is that of their segregation, seclusion or veiling. This has frequently all been subsumed under the title of pardah, for although elements in practice differ, the ideology demanding it is said everywhere to be of the same nature. Thus, Jeffery states,

Elements which are included in the term pardah seem to be parallel in Hindu and Muslim practices. Young Hindu women are often given no more freedom to move around outside their homes after puberty than are Muslims; and the general stress on bodily concealment and the separation between the sexes – while differing in detail can be found in Hindu and Muslim pardah alike. (Jeffery 1979:3)

Thus, differences are seen to be in kind rather than degree and it can be regarded as a cultural rather than a specifically religious phenomenon.

Although Sharma deals with a practice differing from that described by Jeffery, in terms of the degree of seclusion, she also finds the pardah concept useful.

Few women even among Indian Muslims observe strict seclusion, but most (in N. India at least) must observe a type of circumspection and constraint, outside the strictly domestic sphere which is considered as being directly related to female sexual modesty and which is not demanded by men (although some men will be subject to other kinds of restricting rule, eg. relating to caste purity and pollution.) (Sharma 1980:6)

Sharma does not consider it a specifically Indian phenomenon, however, saying that it is part of a

"...spectrum for all women. Western women are just standing at the weaker end." (Ibid.:6)

The reasons for seclusion, or some form of separation, in the Muslim context, are said to stem from the ideology of an "honour and shame" culture, where chastity and modest behaviour are essential for women, in terms of maintaining and upholding the family honour. Any inappropriate messages given will reflect badly upon the family, and it will experience shame vis-a-vis other members of the community. As Papanek says,

Women's proper behaviour as sheltered persons becomes an important source of the status of their protectors. The achievement of symbolic shelter is valued by the man in this kind of society as a measure of control over his environment. In a culture where male pride is a very significant, and very fragile, element of identity and status, the seclusion of women is an important aspect of male control. (Papanek 1973:317)

In Hinduism, the dominant ideology of femaleness is somewhat different, even if the resultant behaviour is the same. It comprises an important duality.

On the one hand, the woman is fertile, benevolent - the bestower; on the other she is aggressive, malevolent - the destroyer. (Wadley 1977:114)

Thus, resulting from purported female weakness on account of their sexuality and their powerlessness in the face of temptation, both Muslim and Hindu women are classified in male ideology, - Moslem women are seen as victims, Hindu women are seen as temptresses.

Papanek quotes Carstairs from research amongst Rajasthani Hindus.

A man's wife comes to him as a stranger, chosen for him as a result of negotiations in which he and she have had little to say. She is, moreover, an emissary from the race of women and as such, she stands for carnal temptation, for seduction from the ideal values represented by his father and his guru. (in Papanek 1973:317)

The presence of avoidance rules in Hindu purdah can therefore be seen partially as a means to protect the men as much as the women.

Sharma in some way supports this when she says,

When stranger women arrive, they have to be "domesticated". Yet even when a woman has become well and truly integrated into her conjugal household, and in the course of time has become mistress of it, the conceptual separation of kin and affines is still rigorously maintained, and different modes of behaviour and different sentimental attitudes remain appropriate for the people of one's natal home and the people of one's affinal home. Looking at the same question from the male point of view, daughters and sisters remain forever separate as a category from wives and daughters-in-law. There is a further separation between the impure role of woman as sexual agent, and the positively valued role of mother. (Sharma 1978c:221)

Sharma stresses the political aspects of avoidance, when she says that ghungat (where a wife veils in front of her husband's senior male kin), is an economical mode of control compared to the pardah of total seclusion. This is because,

1) It limits women's social effectiveness, without limiting their productivity, and turning them into economically redundant status symbols. 2) It is economical in the sense that it cuts women off from free and effective communication with only those men who may be expected to have most control and influence. It does not cut them off from communication with all men, and the greatest effect is obtained with the least effort. It is not necessary to symbolise the subordination of all women to all men in order to limit their activities as a sex. (Ibid.:229)

In the situation analysed by Jeffery, the seclusion is more or less total, and women are dependent upon men for any contact whatever with the outside. Jeffery found however that the pirzada women feel themselves privileged in economic terms.

They are largely cocooned in isolated self-importance. (Jeffery 1979:174)

Thus, Jeffery says that although in some respects the women question their position, they do not do so in terms of the structure, but simply by way of their own position within that structure, at that moment. They do not wish to change the game itself, only the way that the dice are loaded.

The stance of the pirzada women is a complex mixture of deep-rooted commitment and reluctant compliance, of accepting things as they are, and of undermining them through their questions and evasions. (Ibid.:161)

Sharma in her study of Ghanyari also talks about a degree of flexibility built into the system, stemming from the fact that as Levi-Strauss says, women are not just ciphers, they speak (Levi-Strauss 1969:496).

Ghanyari women know how to draw the veil across the face in a dozen different ways to denote a dozen different degrees of respect. (I have seen the veil used insolently.) Therefore, whilst the veil depersonalizes women, and silences them, it does not leave them without means of expression.(Sharma 1978c:224)

Vreede-de Stuers reiterates such possibilities when she says,

We must not forget that within the rigid frame of institutionalized family behaviour and family roles and the kinship terminology that goes with it, there remains a certain liberty of expression. In the use of terms and the way of addressing the members of the family, each individual acts according to his or her own preference. And as everywhere, the voice and the eyes refuse to conform to the written word; they add personal accent to an otherwise strictly conformist attitude. (Vreede-de Stuers 1968:38)

Yet again, Skjonsberg, when she describes the Tamil women of Sri Lanka as a "special caste", views the marital relationship as in some ways resembling the patron/client jajmani relationship, but in others being susceptible to infinite variety and "quality".

Marriage involves more than material relations. There is a qualitative aspect which makes the marriage contract far more complicated than the jajmani contract. Emotional and sexual relations are of a deeply personal nature and the concomitant psychological satisfactions - or dissatisfactions - give a woman certain advantages - or disadvantages - as compared to most client castes, in her dealings with the "patron". Often the husband depends emotionally on "the wife", and this strengthens the woman's position in marriage, expanding her rights and autonomy. However - and this is important - such advantages are not institutionalised aspects of marriage, merely a fortunate and not universal by-product. (Skjonsberg 1982:70)

Thus, these anthropologists draw attention to the subordination of women vis-a-vis men in South Asia, which is seen to be universal in terms of class or category, but which varies in degree in terms of the individual.

The interaction between the sexes and between the castes is said to be status- unequal, while intra-caste and intra-sex interaction is basically status-equal. Perhaps in these cases it is also a matter of degree. However, researchers generally do not see it as such, and an important focus for both Sharma and Jeffery is the existence or absence of female solidarity, based upon economic collaboration, or common perceptions of adversity through their low status.

Jeffery sees the potential for this, but finds little evidence of it in the context in which she was studying.

Although separation between the spheres of men and women may provide room for an autonomous female sphere over which men have little control, it seems that women's status generally tends to be lower the more they are excluded from extra-domestic roles. (Jeffery 1979:42)

In this she refers to women's status vis-a-vis Pirzada men, as she has elsewhere stated that their status vis-a-vis the outside world is relatively high, especially with reference to the women of other groups.

Sharma's research suggests that the position of some other women in South Asia is not quite so bleak.

Data on Muslim women suggest that even where segregation is very strictly enforced and where women are virtually invisible in public life, they are nevertheless not forced into total economic and political passivity. Their segregation may even create a sense of solidarity among women in so far as the enforced realisation of their common situation provides the basis for co-operation and mutual support. (Sharma 1978a:263)

Collaboration amongst women is seen chiefly in terms of economics and politics. Thus, it is reputedly only when women actually work together that they are portrayed as co-operating to any significant extent. In these respects then, and as far as they go, these analyses present a picture of the limitations placed upon Indian women in terms of the inter-household contacts they can forge, the intra-household position (especially of junior wives), and the general confinement and lack of mobility of all women.

Thus, Sharma can say that,

Co-operation between women therefore is very important, but it is "given" by the structure of household relations rather than developing spontaneously as a result of their common predicaments as women. (Sharma 1978a:268)

Jeffery and Sharma both say that men are essential for the categorisation of individual women. Relationships are thus apparently mediated by men, in that it is a result of marriage that women are brought together initially, that they are only referred to, or avoided in terms of their contracts with individual men. Men are also required to enable female external venturing. It is a hypothesis of this thesis however, that Kutchi women also define themselves as a category and

retain control over their own lives in mode of thought, even if they cannot in economic terms.

Skjonsberg's description of women as something of a "special caste" is similarly viewed predominantly in terms of economic values and unequal distribution. All this is social fact, but it is perhaps partial and certain assumptions need to be questioned. As Jeffery says,

In the village the women are embedded in a domain in which they can be powerful and at ease, in contrast to their powerlessness and unease in the outside world. (Jeffery 1979:171)

And as MacCormack says,

Domestic services are devalued in advanced industrial societies where "work" is defined as wage labour and is separated from domestic space, and where a "population problem" is perceived. But those are the biases of our own culture and are not universally valid. (MacCormack 1980:16)

Yet Skjonsberg's thesis of women occupying a "special caste" is an interesting and challenging one. It has been hinted at by other writers, but never carried as far. Women, on the whole are seen to derive everything from men - in terms of caste and status position, wealth and self-esteem. (Skjonsberg does not dispute this.) I would suggest that although women are dependent upon men for most material things, there remains the question of the essential definition of being women in a society where a non-woman in certain situations is as devalued as a non-man in others. As MacCormack says,

Unless we want to deny women a potential for intelligence and intellectual curiosity equal to men's, we logically cannot deny them conceptual models for making sense of their own existence.(1980:14)

Skjonsberg defines her "caste" of women in economic and political terms. I would suggest, following MacCormack that we go further than this in the Kutchi case and look at ideological aspects. Skjonsberg's argument is appealing however in that it draws attention to this "special caste's" existence. Her descriptions of the limitations upon women which imply only negative characteristics, will be seen in the ethnography to have been given positive values by Kutchi women, because of the way they see themselves as women, and the way in

which they define their role in the wider society.

Skjonsberg however, retreats from the idea of total gender and caste identification.

I am not claiming that sexist stratification is a caste stratification. The purpose is to show that the two stratification systems are maintained in many similar ways and interact at various points. (1982:10)

She takes as exemplifying practices the segregation of the sexes, the division of labour, the contractual relationship between husband as patron and wife as client, commensal customs and taboos, the lack of spatial mobility for women because of honour and shame concepts and the sexually threatening environment, and the apparent double-bind situation within the family, which,

"....not only exploits and oppresses; it is also only through the family that women can expect support and protection." (Ibid.:121)

A description of the caste system in general and the "casteing" of women in particular is here given by Skjonsberg.

In a community with a strict division of labour, people with the same or a similar position in given exchange relations are grouped together, and isolated as against other groups or social strata. This grouping together is necessary in order to make the system work. Each stratum is supposed to know "its place" and act accordingly. Group-specific characteristics are necessary in order to legitimise and maintain ranking. The outcastes are assigned "polluting" work and are considered "polluted", and this then serves to legitimise their continued undertaking of the "dirty work" in the community. Women, who never go further afield than the well, are labelled as ignorant and not to be listened to in matters of importance. (Ibid.:216)

It would be hard indeed if the people unquestioningly accepted these labels. But, as Ardener says,

The human spirit, it seems, creates its own visions of heaven and its triumphs as well as its own damnations and failures, even in apparently unpromising environments. (Ardener, S. 1981:22)

Perhaps here we must ask who does the labelling and whether it is only the anthropologist who takes such categorisation to heart? The

men in the society certainly label the women in such a manner. But it is the duty of the anthropologist to look at the models of the people themselves and not simply to subscribe to the dominant mode of categorisation.

Skjonsberg may have too easily accepted the latter view when she says,

The separation of male and female activities into a public and a domestic sphere leads to different outlooks and frames of reference between men and women. While undertakings in the public sphere are approved, those in the private sphere are belittled by both women and men.... The socially accepted viewpoints are those of the men. Even if in the absence of men, conversation between women often becomes personal and intimate and women venture to verbalise their points of view, express their hardships and frustrations, their account of their experience is not held to be significant. (Skjonsberg 1982:63)

In this, Skjonsberg draws attention to a separate experience and interpretation of that experience, and says that it is women's experience that is devalued by both sexes. It is presumably easy to see why this experience is not deemed significant by men. But what of a hypothetical case where the male experience is not thought significant by the female group? Also, there is surely the possibility in another context, that the women who are actually living these lives, do not deem them insignificant? True, they are limited and circumscribed by others, but is this automatically made conscious, or even uttered or pondered upon? MacCormack's earlier statement questions our ethnocentric value- judgements.

In this thesis, I will illustrate an alternative model of reality, where women feel the strength of their own domain outweighs accepted subordination, and subordination itself may be a given social fact to work within rather than around. I take the position that it is only by taking into account the models of the people that one can in any measure understand their values, attitudes and actions. The notion of the "muted group", proposed by Hardman (Ardener, S. 1975:xii), refers to a relatively "inarticulate" group whose interests are at variance with those of the dominant group in society. From the outside and from

the literature, it might appear that Kutchi women would be similarly powerless and "muted". I posit however that amongst this female group there is a maintenance of considerable group-esteem and value and that if we cannot accommodate this within our own anthropological models, they need revision.

This phenomenon may be due to the socio-economic circumstances in a certain place at a certain time. But perhaps we can also discern similar patterns elsewhere (see Ridd 1981, for a South African context).

Such external structural factors are recognised by Skjonsberg.

Exploitation and oppression are not primarily matters of role models (intra- group interaction), but result from the material and socio-political context in which people live, and this context is spelled out most clearly in the status- unequal interaction. (Skjonsberg 1982:116)

Yet, returning again to interpretation and emphasis, as researchers we have a definite bias towards male models of society, as Ardener and others have pointed out (Ardener, S.(ed.) 1975). The tools of our trade almost by definition observe and categorise power, authority, economy in terms of a dominant western mode of thought which is exclusively male in its academic and literary foundation. Perhaps we are as much circumscribed by our own categories and ways of conceptualising "significance", as Indian women are by theirs? Thus, the way in which people speak is often predetermined in our translation by our values. Pettigrew, Okely and an increasing number of female social anthropologists have described how their focus and analysis in the field was at first, and sometimes even later, constrained by a male discipline which values certain social institutions at the expense of others (Pettigrew 1981, Okely 1975).

(I apologise in advance, as my own value-judgements and assumptions as to women's societal contribution will no doubt become only too obvious in the ethnography, as I work sometimes unreflectingly with the categories and tools of western thinking and valuations.)

Skjonsberg expresses the limitations of her own approach as follows.

I do feel that any description and analysis of social life written by an outsider in the language of the social sciences must be at best simplistic, superficial and abstract. The sociologist grabs hold of what is most visible, and even though prominent economic and social features and processes do indeed determine the situation of individual people, it is the continuous flow of very personal experiences that provides the frames of reference, the joys and sorrows through which life makes sense - or nonsense - to the individual. (Skjonsberg 1982:67)

This thesis will focus upon the world-view of a group of women belonging to the Kutchi Koli Scheduled Caste, domiciled in Sind, Pakistan. The aim is to present the data as far as possible from the female perspective, relying upon their values and models. A growing body of anthropological literature suggests that it is perhaps not valid to apply western assumptions as to women's subordinate societal place in other contexts. The following data illustrate that there are many factors which determine a woman's place and sense of value in one part of the Indian sub-continent. Perhaps this will challenge our models and thought in this area, and shift the emphasis from male societal definitions encompassing both sexes to that of the female participants' own perceptions of reality.

CONCLUSION

The preceding review of the literature looked at the widest definition of the people studied. The Koli in general were seen to be a large, amorphous group, lacking a cohesive identity, geographically scattered and of disparate status. Smaller groups which resemble castes were then identified, relying upon origin, endogamy, commensality and shared symbols and practices to define identity. One such group was seen to be the Kutchi Koli of Sind.

From the people themselves, the focus shifted to some of the theoretical ideas explaining caste as a mode of thought and basis for action. Here I looked at asymmetry and distinctiveness as the principles

behind Hindu thought, expecting them to have remained fundamental amongst a relatively isolated group in Pakistan. The process of "up-casteing" was also seen as a means whereby the group could perhaps improve its position in its own terms and that of others.

Finally, I looked at certain aspects of female life on the Indian sub-continent and the manner in which anthropologists have defined women's position. I then suggested the theoretical direction to be taken in the thesis, which evolved from my acquaintance with the society and especially the female group, (aspects which have been discussed in the methodology section).

The ethnography that follows attempts to describe the form of expression of Kutchi Koli women rather than speak for them.

Photographs II



4. Man building
house wall



5. Women
planting
peppers



6. Young
married woman
churning
buttermilk

CHAPTER THREE: WOMEN WITHIN THE FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, emphasis will be upon a description of women's lives within the family structure. Their internal reference points and value-system will be explored. The first part will look at women, power and labour and includes the political and economic structuring of relationships within the household and village. The second part will look at women as kin, as girls in the natal village, as siblings, and it includes the nature of the kinship bond. The third part will look at women as wives, emphasising the necessary transformations and their associated meanings, with a brief description of the wedding ceremonies. The role of wife in this society will be explored and its centrality to female perceptions will be emphasised.

The final part will concentrate upon women as mothers, with especial reference to concepts of fertility, birth and socialisation.

In terms of subject, the emphasis throughout this chapter will be upon women as social actors rather than thinkers. Their contributions in the latter area of life will be focussed upon increasingly in the two subsequent ethnographic chapters.

PART ONE : WOMEN, POWER AND LABOUR

Introduction.

- 1) Power and Authority.
- 2) Status and Prestige.
- 3) Ownership.
 - a) Land.
 - b) Property.
 - c) Animals.
 - e) Money.
 - f) Utensils/Implements.
- 4) Labour.
 - a) Role Segregation.
 - b) Hearth and Water Source.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, focus will be upon village and domestic authority; status and prestige amongst the Kutchi; patterns of ownership; and the division of labour. The ideal and the actual will be contrasted, and we will gain our first glimpse of the embeddedness of Kutchi female reality.

1) POWER AND AUTHORITY

The headman is generally accepted as the figure with most authority in the village. Landless villages whose inhabitants work for Moslem landlords use the patel (headman) as guarantor. Here he has the position of mediator and this is the source of his authority. However, if the headman is not rich and respected his authority will automatically decline. The office is perceived as being important and influential in the settlement of relatively large-scale matters; the breaking of a marriage contract, the dismissal of a worker, or theft

for example. In such cases the headman and other influential members of the community would be expected to call a panchayat (meeting of village caste elders). In the words of the village headman,

"Four or five will do, but often as many as twenty get together. Whatever the panchayat decides must be followed for they have the power to outcaste a dissident. He can be banned from Kori homes, forbidden to attend feasts or weddings, and not be able to marry his children. There used to be panchayat often, but nowadays people just go to their landlord."

Outcasting as a threat seems very effective. In practice, albeit occasionally, wrong-doers simply leave their village, and settle far enough away for their reputation not to precede them.

Minor disputes amongst the Kutchi Koli are settled within the hamlet, or preferably within the household. Gossip provides an adequate means of social control for most situations. Much decision-making in Kutchi society is shared between older household members. Long discussions are held within the group over important matters and eventually a decision is reached which pleases most. Old women - past child-bearing age - have important contributions to make at these gatherings, and wives are also often present in the vicinity - the latter's contributions being chiefly dependent upon their age and social standing within the community. (The possibility of their having influenced their husbands behind the scenes however is great.) Generally, such decision-making involves fairly large and important family or external affairs. If something happens which is seen to affect the whole family, usually the whole family is involved in some measure in the response.

Men are seen by both sexes as the ones most suited to make important decisions, and in the last analysis it is always their prerogative and responsibility. In some houses with a very authoritarian household head, he will in fact make most decisions without reference to the rest of his family, even his sons. Over large financial matters, disputes with landlords or fellow tenants, or marriage arrangements, he will however enlist the help and advice of his brothers or close male relatives.

Men are seen as appropriate to deal with such matters because of their infinitely greater knowledge of the outside world and its workings. They have acquired external languages and the concepts of the market-place. They have fairly frequent interaction with members of other ethnic groups, and they enjoy plentiful contact with other Kutchi Koli men - both in the locality and further afield.

The women do not in any way see themselves capable of such external dealings (and they are not - being lost, frightened and tense both in unfamiliar village fields and also during any type of further excursion, except for visiting an extremely familiar Kutchi village - where perhaps they were raised.) This does not imply that with a lot of facts at their disposal, they might not try to influence their husbands or sons - they will. They will also do their best to acquire facts which are external in nature - by interrogating their husbands' younger male relatives, with whom they are in a light-hearted, easy-going relationship. Such information is however, always gained by means of intermediaries. In this respect it is filtered and controlled, and never the result of direct experience.

Influence, and especially subtle influence, is seen as a very acceptable and desirable trait among the women themselves. The men are reluctant to admit that it occurs, although all realise that it does - to a greater or lesser extent. The problem to be always aware of, however, is in ensuring that one's own wife is not seen to exert undue influence. Everyone knows that a wife is prone to do such things, but for a man's peace of mind and respect amongst his peer group, it is essential that such activity remains covert. The trouble with this stipulation is the very public nature of Kutchi village life, not being conducive to keeping anything secret, especially interesting "social facts". It is not only the man who will be ridiculed in such a circumstance, however; the women will also laugh and exert group pressure on the wife for so "hen-pecking" her unfortunate husband and it is usually in the wife's best interest to have a husband who is respected. Very few women will accept such informal power and dismiss the associated ridicule with ease.

It must nevertheless be remembered that women are only ever active in the background, in matters outwith the household. Men are the mediators, negotiators and activists in any public sphere of life.

2) STATUS AND PRESTIGE

Kutchi society is organised in an informal hierarchy chiefly on the basis of wealth. Everyone has knowledge of everyone else's rank position and I rarely saw hints of challenge to status. Ideally, age grants status, and it does, provided everything else is equal; brothers will defer to seniority if they are poorer, or as poor. Practically though, the possession of wealth, and its associated authority, cuts through the majority of age barriers, with the exception perhaps of generation. A man with money is referred to as a "big man", and is accorded appropriate respect.

Married women do not possess status and power in their own right, but gain them through marital association. (See also Sharma. 1980.) Amongst the women, their status hierarchy is a reflection of that of their husbands'. If a woman's husband has wealth and prestige, she will enjoy similar status amongst the female group. This involves being treated with a certain amount of deference by the other women, and, in fact, probably by some men as well. Although officially women as a sex are definitely a subordinate group to men, an individual woman whose husband possesses authority can wield a great deal of that reflected power over an individual man who possesses very little - although only in the private sphere of interpersonal relations, never in the public sphere where women as a group are subordinate.

In such circumstances a poor man has to be very careful to tread tactfully and with respect, in case the afore-mentioned influence is exerted, and he finds the woman's husband requiring a certain loan to be returned, or that his family can no longer enjoy credit at the village shop.

Daughters of rich men may possess a certain amount of informal power in their natal village. On marriage and transfer of location, however, their status becomes dependent upon the husband, rather than the father, although the latter will be granted much respect on visits.

Widows are generally regarded as being in a very unenviable position, and to be pitied. For many this proves to be the case. Other examples show a certain flexibility in the system, however, where a widow on the basis of her former husband's wealth, her influence over her sons, or indeed her own personality and strength of character, has acquired a sizeable amount of status and respect.

3) OWNERSHIP

a) LAND:

Kutchi can often be heard to say that the only real security is in land. Men who have made their money in other occupations, often choose to invest in a plot somewhere. Land with adequate irrigation is highly desired and this results in fierce and frequently corrupt competition. Villagers in Sind with sufficient financial resources, often attempt to supplement the irrigation from the canals with that from tube-wells. The additional water supplies in the region are regarded by the inhabitants as beneficial, in that now all types of previously undreamed of crops can be grown and achieve better market value per acre. Unfortunately, some land in Sind is already showing signs of over-irrigation, fields are lying in an uncultivable state because of salt petre and experts say that much land will probably have to return to desert.

Tenant farmers are totally dependent upon the whim of the landlords, due to the perpetual excess of labour, and they resentfully

recognise this. "Good" landlords are a scarce resource and are treated as such. Men put down permanent roots at such places and their sons will take over their tenancy in later life. The word that a certain landlord, who is reputedly fair and generous, is in need of a tenant, travels fast, and is a main reason for the moving of villagers. Arguments between tenant and landlord are common owing to the nature of the relationship and the fact that both parties think they have the right to cheat each other as much as is pragmatically possible. Because people with better landlords tend to remain with them, it follows that many tenants move frequently round the circle of "bad" landlords, desperately hoping that they will find a better contract next time.

At many times of year, especially after the harvesting of the main crops, families can be seen trundling along the lanes and main roads, perched uncomfortably and haphazardly on top of all their belongings, astride an ox-cart. Women, in general, do not like changing villages, complain about it bitterly and delay departure as long as possible. When the time eventually arrives there will be an emotional leave-taking amongst closest female kin and neighbours. These cases are because of economic necessity. In cases of social necessity, on the other hand, (adultery, debt, theft, for example), families will often disappear, without giving prior warning, in the middle of the night, taking the maximum of possessions possible without drawing attention to themselves.

As mentioned earlier, several Kutchi in the village where we were living, were landlords and had become so in an earlier Governmental Land Distribution Act. It cannot, however be said that they were preferred by other Kutchi as landlords. Elements of jealousy and tension no doubt came into this, but tenants frequently said that they were worse than Moslems, in that they were less fair, more mean, and more unscrupulous. As a community the villagers were very glad that they were landowners, but individual relationships between landlord and tenant were not good. This probably stemmed from the fact that the them/us syndrome of employer/employee relations could not be properly

exploited in such a situation. The landlord had at his disposal much inside information as to the actions of his tenants, and so the latter were able to take advantage of less. In addition to this, expectations were probably higher on the tenants' side as to the nature of a Kutchi landlord. Whereas they would expect the worst of Moslems, it was morally more difficult to harbour the same misgivings about their own caste, especially those to whom they might be related in some way

Kutchi landlords for their part, frequently complained about the laziness of their tenants and the impossible demands made on them in the name of kinship. Some in fact attempted to extricate themselves from such a predicament, by hiring tenants from amongst other Hindu groups at a lower level in the hierarchy. This proved successful in that it did not involve long-term commitment or obligations and it suited seasonal agricultural requirements, but it did not please Kutchi neighbours or relatives. Most people hated the infiltration of the village by strangers (even if they were only on its margins) and it created problems in terms of water pumps, using the shops, keeping children distinct, and collecting fodder for animals. A common complaint from the women was that there was little enough good work and land available for the Kutchi Koli themselves in rural Sind, without letting other groups obtain a share of what there was. It was their village and why should some Kutchi not manage to procure enough to feed their children, while the despicable Bhil and Parkari were becoming "fat". In short the sense of group solidarity among such landlords was seen to be in question. (A fuller discussion of the attitudes of Kutchi women to other ethnic groups will take place in chapter five.)

I know of two cases where widows were left in control of land and were able to profit from its produce. In one, it was to be transferred to the husband's brother's son on the widow's death. In the other, the son was to gain control when he had a family of his own. (In fact a portion of the land had already been sold in order to purchase the wedding jewelry for his new bride.)

b) PROPERTY:

Houses. If a landlord has agreed to employ a tenant, he is obliged to allow him to build a house for his family on some convenient piece of land, or to give him a place that someone else is vacating. In the majority of cases, Kutchi repossess some type of existing structure, usually a mud house with no roof. Good roof timber is long-lasting and highly prized. Kutchi therefore, generally dismantle their existing roof and take it with the rest of their belongings - constructing it afresh when they reach their destination. Access to ample and durable timber can prove expensive or impossible and so most groups treat it as a lifetime investment. In addition, the felling and transportation labour involved make this a larger undertaking than the building of new walls or the replastering of existing ones. While a house is still roofed, it is considered to belong to the timber owners, even if they have temporarily moved to another village. Once the timber has gone, however, the house belongs to the occupier. The timber theoretically and more usually, belongs to the husband, if however, the wife's family have provided, or helped provide the timber, then it may perhaps be referred to as theirs, especially by the wife's zach.

Wheeled vehicles. Ox-carts, push-bikes, motor-bikes, cars, jeeps are owned by males and driven by them in the main. A village daughter may very occasionally drive an ox-cart home from the fields, full of fodder for the animals, but only in this narrowly defined area, and never on roads not belonging to the village. Likewise, a wife may in even rarer circumstances drive back along the same tracks, but not without good reason, such as husband being absent, and not without being remarked upon by all who see her.

c) ANIMALS:

Animals are kept by individual households and in conversation are referred to as the property of that respective group. The members themselves would say, "our goat, our buffalo, our oxen", to distinguish these animals from those of their neighbours, which would be referred

to as "theirs". In everyday language therefore, ownership is defined loosely and if an animal slips its tether, any member of the family will be hailed to restore it to its rightful position.

On the other hand, in many circumstances where an animal is being directly discussed, its ownership will be defined quite rigorously. In general, an ox belongs to a specific man, whereas a buffalo belongs to a woman. Goats and chickens can belong to either sex, dependent upon to whom it was given in the first place. People seem surprised if a division is suggested along gender lines with reference to these animals. Oxen are definitely masculine and buffaloes are definitely feminine, however.

When he marries, a boy will frequently be given an ox by his father. This is in fact the ideal. (Often, however, he will not acquire one until he begins to live separately and cultivate his own plot of land. If the family is very poor, or if there are many sons, he still may not obtain one.)

Girls are given a young buffalo approximately a year after they marry. Their brother brings it to the village as a gift from mother to daughter. The wife is very proud of this female animal, and feeds and cares for it herself. It gives her a certain amount of power and independence. (See also Humphrey 1978.) It is also seen as a sign of the wealth of her own family and their degree of feeling for her. In it lies the potentiality of strength-giving nourishment for her future household. Buffalo milk is very prestigious and highly regarded and no Kutchi would conceive of drinking goat's milk in preference. From it is acquired the ghi (clarified butter) necessary for all proper cooking, and the sash (buttermilk), which is the essential ingredient of the morning meal with chapatti. Not only does the possession of a buffalo make a family viable as a unit, but it means that it can give appropriate hospitality, in terms of food and drink. A wife with a buffalo, thus caters well for both guests and family. Men drink a great deal of milk, and so do children - if economically possible. Thus, with her entry to her husband's group, the wife (ideally) provides children, which

she nourishes at the breast. She maintains her essential position as provider of strength- giving milk for the family by being owner of a buffalo - her continuity and theirs thus being ensured.

Animals can therefore belong to either sex and are referred to in terms of the owner's name. (Provided there is not a taboo on that name for the person doing the referring, in which case a substitute will be invoked.) When it is a matter of any connected dealings with external society, however, only men are involved. They thus conduct affairs of sale, purchase, transportation, and fertilisation. Often the women benefit through prestige of ownership if purchases are made. Sometimes too, they benefit from the sale of their own animal. For example, Netha, a very strong woman, decided that her jewelry had become too old, and that the family possessed quite enough animals (probably second most in the village). Therefore she told her husband to sell one of her buffaloes and purchase some silver jewelry with the proceeds. He duly did so.

On the other hand, in a case of which I had direct experience, social pressure was upon the wife to sell her animal when things became financially difficult for the husband. I have heard of many similar instances in the society, where women have had to allow their animals to be sold to pay the husband's debts, or simply contribute to the family's well-being. Although men may also sell their animals at such times, firstly it is a male decision to sell and secondly to decide which beast has to go. Women do not, and in fact cannot, enforce important decisions on their husbands in the same way.

Another factor in the argument is that buffaloes are less important than oxen and are therefore first to be lost. Many families do not have buffaloes; of these many have oxen. Those families who do not have oxen, certainly do not have buffaloes. This would make sound economic sense for the household however, for to be without an ox would mean that the family would have great difficulty participating in basic agricultural activities, and would not be an independently viable unit - continually having to borrow the oxen of others and thus be in

an inferior position to them. The lack of a buffalo involves lack of prestige and nutritionally weaker family members, but is not quite such a disability. A wife begging other households for milk is thus more common and more acceptable than a husband begging for the essential addition to his labour.

d) JEWELRY:

Jewelry given to the wife by her family can occasionally be retained if she becomes a widow. These items in fact fall into the category of female possessions, rather than wifely ones - young girls often wearing some, if not all the ear jewelry, and sometimes also the rings. Those items directly associated with the marriage - bracelets, necklace, and anklets - revert to the husband's family on his death. Sometimes they will be allocated within the family if they are needed, for example for a new bride, or to replace a sister's worn ones. More often than not, they are sold to help contribute to the funeral expenses. It was admitted by my informants that generally they were not needed, but that they had to be taken, so that everyone could see that the woman was a widow "poor thing". Implicit in this was the idea that no-one would voluntarily give up their jewelry, and that therefore it had to be "taken". Also, jewelry nakedness was seen as the prime symbol of widowhood.

In all the stages of a Kutchi woman's life, her social status is worn externally for all to see. By her dress one can immediately perceive whether she is single, married, divorced or widowed. Every stage of a woman's life is defined in male ideology in terms of her relationship with a man - father, husband, no-husband, or husband's male kin. The lack of jewelry is seen as essential to being a widow, and being seen to be one - no matter what the status of the family in question.

Jewelry is ideally the property of the married woman whilst her husband is alive and as such she can lend it, store, or wear it. As with her animals, however, as mentioned above, if the family have

financial difficulties, the husband is at liberty to sell certain items. Most women do, in fact, retain their anklets, and both bracelets are never sold as they are the supreme symbol of marriage - their absence connoting widowhood, either in potentiality or actuality. (Women believe that not wearing the bracelets, or talking of their husband's death, will cause it to take place.)

Many women have "lost" their necklaces by the time they reach middle age, especially if they have many children. Once sold, it is a rare family which can afford the outlay for a new one. Thus, it is the sign of a rich woman, if she can go to a wedding in her middle age, wearing her necklace.

e) MONEY:

Men have direct access to money; through wage-labour, through the sale of crops, and through various other transactions of the market-place. Women have only very indirect access to money. They have little opportunity to work for money and even when they do, as with cotton-picking, the wages are paid to the male head of the household. (The women may, however, benefit from the latter in terms of new clothing.) This does not mean that the women do not know what money is, or rarely handle it. At certain times of year, the Kutchi have a great deal of money in their possession, having sold cotton or onions. Not using any system of saving or banking, this wealth is stored in the houses - generally inside a locked metal trunk - with the wife having the key. Many times I found men who could not gain access to money because their wives were out in the fields. A strong wife will know how much is inside the trunk and prevent her husband from spending too much of it.

Most wives, in fact, decide upon much of the allocation of household resources. Although it is only the men who buy things in town, and actually deal with commerce and the market-place, the women issue instructions as to what they want. They say what kind of cloth is needed for themselves and the children, and ask the husband

whether he wants anything for himself. They tell him what is to be made by the derzi (tailor); which household stores and utensils are required; and if there is any special luxury - in the way of sweetmeats, or material goods - that they wish brought. A husband will generally carry out these commands to the letter. He may bring other things in addition, but this is up to the individual and the general household wealth.

The problem women have with money tends rather to be what to spend it on, than whether they can spend it. Hardly ever leaving the village and never explicitly for the purpose of visiting shops, they find choice and competition difficult. Clothes are extremely important to Kutchi women. The style of clothing is the same for everyone at a certain stage of life, but fabric quality in its strength, richness of dye and texture is very important in distinguishing a rich woman from others less affluent. Thus, any family which can possibly afford it, dresses its women in bright nylon and synthetic fabrics. These do not immediately fade in the harsh sun, or after one wash, as do local cottons. Important in the married woman's blouse is the contrast in colours between breast and the rest. Poorer womens' cotton blouses usually look very drab and lacking in contrast in a very short time. Such blouses can be purchased and sewn by the tailor for approximately sixteen rupees. The blouses of rich women can cost as much as two hundred rupees however. Most people's expenditure lies somewhere in-between. The same differences apply to the skirt and headcloth material, with the former being more expensive owing to the quantity necessary.

Kutchi women possess a keen sense of price and comparison, which is mostly vicarious. However, whenever they have the opportunity, they bargain astutely with travelling peddlars and refuse to pay more for something than they think it is worth. On the other hand, granted that they have beaten the merchant down to the "correct" price, worth is finally ascertained only on the grounds of cost. Amongst the Kutchi the first question will always be how much something cost. If they think the owner has been cheated, they will immediately say so.

If on the other hand they appreciate the purchase's value, the price is the main concern and in future transactions, those in a competitive relationship will ensure that their next purchase is superior in quality and, very importantly, also in price.

This is an attitude most prevalent amongst the female group, but which has to be aided and abetted by the males, as they do the buying. Clever husbands who have an eye for fashion and are skilled in the market-place, are very much appreciated, or envied. They have to watch what women are wearing both in their own and in other visited villages. They then have to apply these facts when purchasing things for their own family. Perhaps they might be even more skilled, in that they can choose a very good cloth that they are sure will start a fashion. Fashions spread very quickly amongst the Kutchi. People like having what everyone else has, and although in some ways it is nice to set trends, it is important never to be too different. Lack of choice for the women contributes much here. Watching what someone else is wearing facilitates one's own choice. It also makes it easier to ensure that the husband buys the right thing. For example, the dialogue between a couple as he is about to go to town:

Wife: "I need a new veila (headcloth, not tie-dyed).

Husband: "Do you? What type?"

Wife: "Like that new one X has got."

Husband: "The pink one with flowers you mean?"

Wife: "No! You're not much good are you? That's the second last one, and I can't see that colour suiting my skin, can you? You have to be very light for that. (Mind you, it doesn't suit hers either, does it?) No I mean that new green one with the stripes."

Husband: "I know the one you mean now. But if I can't get that one, what else would you like?"

Wife: "Oh, you'll manage to get that one. X's husband did, didn't he? But if you can't I want one lighter, not darker, and with stripes, not with flowers. And I don't want any yellow in it - yellow gets so dirty when you are cooking and sitting down. And its got to be thin nylon, but not that stuff that won't stay on your head. And get a bit extra so that Y (young daughter) can have one too. They," (she jerks her head conspiratorially towards the house next-door) "have bought another one for Z (young daughter's contemporary). She doesn't need one either."

Such conversations were very typical. "Good" husbands were those who got things right, and brought back the appropriate things for the family. "Bad" husbands were those who got things wrong; showed no taste in choosing alternatives, or who tried to save money when purchasing clothes. Poorer women were generally grateful for whatever they received - being an improvement upon what they had been wearing previously. Other richer women, who had the misfortune to have husbands with bad taste, would often be sulky and refuse to wear what had been brought. Public opinion did not blame them, it blamed the husband for being so useless and wasting money. It can be seen from this, that women have a strong hold on a sphere which is defined as prestigious by both sexes.

Men thus deal with large amounts of money, but in relation to the household, women generally decide how it will be spent. Women have probably always retained a small amount of money about their persons, to deal with any necessities occurring in the village; for example, giving money to itinerant beggars, sending wheat to be ground at the mill with a young boy, buying goods from the occasional peddler. The amount of money they have these days seems however to be on the increase.

There are at present two shops in the village, and although they are expensive, many more items are being bought locally. It is perceived as less of a crisis if families finish their supplies, or if unexpected guests arrive. (There is also, probably associatedly, less reciprocity and dependence on neighbours at such times.) Women and children use the shops more than men. They are considered appropriate womens' provinces, being both within the village, and run and staffed by Kutchi Koli. Women thus require and are given, more money for such purposes, and also to keep the children happy, with their incessant demands for sweets.

An increasing number of Pathan merchants have been coming to the village to sell cloth. This is, of course, greeted with a great deal of

excitement, and all the women flock to see this unaccustomed degree of choice. Purchases are frequently made here, but usually they are not given prestigious use and have become rather a means whereby rich women can flaunt their surplus wealth by buying a good piece of cloth (the envy of others) only to let their children play with it later in the dirt. Thus, although women always go to see such peddlars - they generally have the reputation of hawking inferior and more expensive goods - few women actually buy here (although these few may buy much), and man's role as the main buyer in the market-place has in no way diminished.

f) UTENSILS / IMPLEMENTS:

As can probably be seen from the preceding sections, men control external transactions and women internal ones. If a domestic utensil is required, a wife will tell her husband to bring one from town, if the money is to be spared at that time. Women will thus ascertain what is needed in this realm and men will not question their judgement. In similar vein, men will decide what is required in the external, agricultural domain, and will purchase these things - if they have appropriate means available. Men may possess the purchasing power and the knowledge and ability to cope with the transactions of the market-place, but this does not mean that they make all the decisions as has been shown.

4) LABOUR

a) ROLE SEGREGATION.

In practically all spheres of Kutchi Koli life, there is fairly rigid segregation between the sexes. As has been mentioned above, there is an opposition between external male affairs, and internal female ones. This means in practice that the men are more concerned with

agricultural matters and the economy at large, whereas women are more concerned with home and village. Yet this is too simplistic a division in practice, although it echoes popular conceptualisation of the situation. Men do perform tasks in the village, and women do take part in agricultural activities. In fact, the Kutchi Koli closely resemble the people of Ghanyari described by Sharma in their attitudes and activities, (1978a).

It is the men who prepare the fields for the seeds - ploughing, fertilising and usually planting. (See photograph 2) Both men and women do the weeding - dependent on necessity, and the women harvest the crops. Men package, transport and sell. These latter require knowledge of market trends, mobility, and the ability to converse in languages other than their mother tongue. Women and children collect the animal fodder. Men keep the canal channels from becoming silted. They bring additional requirements or luxuries from the outside into the village. Men look after house walls and roofs - anything involving the addition of straw to mud. (See photograph 4) Women are responsible for the cleanliness and upkeep of their homes - sweeping and mud/ dung plastering. They look after children and animals - feeding and watering, which tasks they also perform for their menfolk. They are responsible for chopping and bringing home firewood, and for washing the household clothes. As the women stressed,

"We say that a man is guest in the house, that is why the woman has to do all the household work."

It is the use of an intermediary instrument, which frequently separates male from female work. Male agricultural implements are often metal - ploughs, spades hand-hoes for example. Women more frequently use only their hands, as in plastering the house, weeding, pepper planting or kneading the unleavened bread. They will however cut grass with a metal scythe. The latter is rarely used by men, but often by boys.

In our terms then, Kutchi women can be seen to have inferior economic roles. The tasks they perform require more stamina than skill, and prestigious utensils are held by the men. Kutchi men would

also say that their tasks are superior, and define male work as "clever". It is work that women are perceived as being unable to do, or at least without great difficulty. Kutchi women deeply accept this division of labour, and it is never questioned. (This does not imply that they devalue themselves because of it - such evaluations are conceptually based, not pragmatically - and this will be explored later.)

When asked why men applied the straw/mud mixture to walls, but did not mud/dung because that was women's work, the women said:

"Men do the walls because it is more difficult. They do it with a wooden instrument, and it is skillful because the stuff might fall off. Women could do it, but they would not do it as well. A man who has no wife, poor soul, may well have to mud/dung plaster himself. What else can he do?"

Although women find the idea of doing men's work very difficult because of its very nature, men have no such ideas about women's work. They define it as work, being tiring and time-consuming, but its skill is regarded as minimal. Men entertain no doubt that they can perform women's physical tasks very easily. This is seen at rituals and ceremonies where there is a role reversal and men do the preparation and cooking.(See photograph 10) Cooking for such events is prestigious and huge quantities are involved. The final result has to impress guests and so it is deemed fitting for the "higher" sex to cook at these times. Men would often say that women could never cook for such numbers because calculations were involved, they would get things wrong and it would all be ruined. (Women enjoy such events as a break from the normal routine. Not only is richer food cooked, but it is served to the women by young men with whom they can joke, and they can also demand an excessive amount to eat.)

Men never cook on a daily basis however. They would occasionally make a meat curry or a vegetable curry if the vegetables were to be out of the ordinary. Sometimes they would make special sweetmeats for the children. Men would not make rotlo (chapatti) - the staple bread pancake. They claim that they are able to, having watched the women all their lives. They also know that there are men who make them for money in the food shops in town. (Note Skjonsberg. 1982,

who states that women's tasks suddenly become prestigious if monetary gain can be perceived in them, and at this stage they are taken over by men.)

I have only seen one village man make chapatti. He was making a batch to feed some men who had been helping him with work in his fields. His wife was in evidence, but was looking after the animals. When asked why, she giggled nervously, as she knew how non-conformist they were being. The husband would undoubtedly be laughed at and she would be the butt of gossip for being a bad wife. They were in fact something of an anomalous couple, being childless and having to suffer gossip about this. Therefore although the ideal is a fairly rigid segregated model, the practice does vary somewhat - generally dependent on the marital relationship and how much deviation from the norm is tolerated by both partners.)

Another specifically male province is the brewing of liquor (an illegal practice in Moslem Pakistan) - a type of sugar-cane rum. Women very rarely have an alcoholic drink and when they do it is in very small amounts. Men, on the other hand, drink in a big and fairly ritualised way if there is any alcohol available. I know of two women who regularly brew alcohol for their husbands. This is unusual, but seems to be accepted by all but a tiny minority of the other women. Male drinking is a competitive event. The host tries to give his guests more drink than they can manage. The guests try to drink all he can offer or else be the last to vomit. Women find these times foolish and juvenile. They laugh at their menfolk behind their backs and refer to them as they would to children; patronisingly accepting "a game", which to outsiders appears comical and degrading. Some men realise the weakening affect this may have in terms of women's attitudes towards them. As Nursing said,

"What is the point of being their bosses most of the time, if you let them see you at your hour of weakness."

At certain times of the year, especially the spring and summer, the men have to work very hard on the land. Sometimes they are working all day, and all night as well - making sure that their fields obtain the

infrequently allocated canal water, guarding harvested crops, and in addition protecting the village from would-be thieves. Male work seems to have peaks and troughs - times when there is much to be done, times when there is remarkably little. The latter usually falls in the winter, when there is correspondingly much time spent talking, drinking, smoking and visiting.

Women on the other hand, always having to maintain the household, work more on an even level. This also has peaks however, as during the cotton picking and other harvests, when their labour is required outside the village. (See photographs 3 and 5) Cotton is cash-cropped in the area and the picking is women's work. Male household heads are paid directly by Sindi from the factory for the amount their women pick per day. The proceeds are used to pay for weddings or expensive commodities. Women may benefit indirectly in terms of new clothes or other prestige goods. Most families grow cotton, pick their own and help others with theirs. Kinship obligations and general reciprocity usually ensure enough pickers. However, it was noted that several families, less prestigious or less popular, were very short of people to pick their cotton in 1981.

One man had to offer a feast of rice to ensure sufficient pickers. Another had to tempt some women from a poorer village. Young wives from rich families have been known to refuse such arduous work - being conducted at the most hot and humid time of year. One rich woman, who had previously refused to help her brother's wife with their cotton, could be seen regularly indulging in the more leisurely female work of sewing quilts and skirts with the other rich women of the neighbourhood. (Social change is perhaps responsible for female altering evaluations of external labour and it may also provide the potential for some women^{to} apply them in practice. This will be explored in the chapter five.)

The new trend however, created some tension between the women, as previously cotton-picking had been something in which everyone participated, and enjoyed. Female cotton pickers have a very comradely

approach to the venture - gossiping, telling "rude" jokes and being generally light-hearted. Except for its increasing lack of prestige, the women express pleasure for this work, perceiving it as somewhat different from their usual occupations.

Women see themselves in terms of the group. To an observer it soon becomes clear that conceptual more than economic solidarity is important to them. Cotton-picking time provides a vehicle through which to emphasise this fundamental gender reality, at the expense of a masculine one. In this respect, fellow females who appear to some degree to be changing the rules of the game, are posing a threat; minimal so far.

Women subscribe to the reality of the group. Whenever outside the village, they walk or work in groups. Women and girls fetch grass and wood together. They weed together, plant together, and help with the harvest in work groups. An exception to this may be a woman and her children taking food out to the men in the fields. These fields will be in close proximity however, and everyone else notes where she is going, so that harm may not befall her - either from her own intention or that of others.

No woman would go out of the village after dark, and few, unless old, would go alone in the daytime. Being accompanied by others is always deemed preferable, and going to the nearest, most accessible fields for grass and wood is the correct form of behaviour. Men would stress that this is an important means of defining oneself as a "good" wife, and of not dishonouring one's patrilineage. The Indian literature, and my initial reactions to female behaviour, were that they acted in this way to escape censure by gossip and public opinion. However, I now feel that the women were maintaining their own integrity, and their own definitions of self. They were not permitting themselves to be circumscribed for others, or because of others, but essentially because of their total embeddedness in the concept of ideal female behaviour, which necessitated behaving unreflectingly in a certain way. This resulted in women not ever wanting, or even liking being

alone at any stage of the day or life cycle. This was true also for basic biological functions.

Men, on the other hand, are perfectly happy to wander to the fields alone, to work there, or to go into town alone. This does not mean that Kutchi men are not gregarious characters. They love sitting chatting upon their rope beds and will do so for hours. They are comfortable alone or in a crowd, whereas women are only at ease in the latter.

There exists a definite ethic of work-sharing within the female group. Others will automatically help one woman to feed any guests from another village. Kinship bonds and ties of reciprocity come into play in such situations. In addition, all the women of one household are ideally expected to share the workload in the daily course of events. The quoted example comes from an oldish woman talking about the two women in the house opposite.

"They have got to work together. One goes out for grass, while another does something else. It is only sensible. What is the point of living separately, and each having to get a little bit of grass, cook a couple of chapatti or a drop of curry? It is just nonsense. You have got to share tasks to get through the work. And one has to work, it is necessary. Otherwise how does one get one's stomach filled? If you do not work, there is no food - either from money, or from looking after animals."

From this one can note the firm belief that women have concerning their own power - in terms of their ability to control their own stomachs and destinies.

b) HEARTH AND WATER SOURCE.

From the above two centres derive a great deal of a woman's power and influence in the domestic sphere.

It is the woman of the house who rises before anyone else, milking the animals before making tea for the rest of the household.

Mid-morning she makes the unleavened bread pancakes, and feeds the family at home - perhaps with a vegetable curry and some freshly churned buttermilk, or perhaps simply fried green peppers. If the men and boys are working in the fields, she takes them their meal there. Early afternoon she makes tea for the family, and in the evening they partake of their chief meal of the day - bread and vegetable curry, or occasionally rice.

She it is who makes the food and serves her husband and sons first, ideally eating only what is left-over. Being a good and ample cook is a matter of prestige, and the women have a great deal of pride about their role as allocator and provider. A widowed man is much to be pitied, as he has, "No-one to give him rotlo" (chapatti).

Little girls are taught at an early age that this giving of food and drink is one of their most important roles and assets. Thus at night a little girl who is sleeping will often be woken by her mother to go and fetch food for her hungry younger brothers.

Therefore, although men grow the food, women can be seen to mediate between its growth and their stomachs. The kitchen area (and in fact the house in general), is female territory, and although a man can enter here, he does so at the risk of losing face - both in the opinion of the other men, and in the opinion of his wife and family. (See also Ridd. 1981, Hirschon. 1981.)

This then is the stuff of which tales are made - men starving because their wives are mean (or because they have had an argument); men having to visit other houses all the time because their wives are ill or absent; or the great danger, frequently discussed, of going to live with one's wife's family where they will not feed the incoming husband, or help him when he is ill. (An example of one of these instances outwith the village has been amusingly described by S.Rushdie in "Midnight's Children", (1981:41-43)).

At the other end of the spectrum, there are jokes and tales of women who feed their husbands the good things at the expense of male guests. (This is against all their ideals of hospitality, where the guest should obtain the best one is able to provide; although perhaps the reality is somewhat different.)

Most women give their husbands the best and most food. They feed their sons the next best, and the women and older female children have what remains. The quantity and quality of the latter depends upon the general material position of the household. Some women, however make a point of giving their husbands practically everything, and leave remarkably little for themselves. Others have more or less the same food as their husbands, with less meat and milk. I will nevertheless include a quote from a rather pompous young man who was perpetually bemoaning the changing times. The essence is far from what actually happens, however I think it valid to show certain male ideal concepts and traditional attitudes:-

"The husband/wife relationship is no longer what it used to be or what it should be. In early times, the husband would always be fed first, and his wife would eat only when he had eaten. For he was Bhagvan (God, controller of fortune) to her you see. Should it not be so? But in these times, women keep no kiri (rules). They feed their husbands, but they have eaten the best already. Such are the times."

The water source is the other main centre of female power. Women always fetch water for the household consumption. No man would ever fill a water-pot, although he might on rare occasions fill a glass for himself at the pump. (Usually younger men.) The importance of the water-provider becomes apparent after only a short time in such a climate. In addition, water is at the centre of purity and cleanliness. Women wash all men's clothes, and sometimes pump water for their baths. If a man wears dirty clothes it is soon commented upon, because despite ever-present dirt and dust, Pakistanis in general pride themselves on colourful, clean and smart clothes. Thus a wife will be considered lazy, inefficient or even worse - stronger than her husband - if such lapses occur; and it is the responsibility of her female affines to ensure that she is kept in check.

Generally speaking, the women say that their work is dull and repetitive. It is not a thing that they say all the time, and they in fact rarely complain. However, if the conversation comes round to this theme, this is their attitude towards their work, and they always say that they have a great deal to do. To us this seems hardly surprising, but what we would perhaps find odd is that they do not compare their own situation with that of the men. In twenty months I heard no reference to the laziness of men as a sex, or complaints about their dominant advantageous social position. This was not because they were so down-trodden and exploited that they did not dare voice such opinions. They appeared instead to define themselves in opposition to men, accepting inequality as an unchallengeable social fact.

The women do not desire to perform male tasks. They may not like their own work, but they perceive no alternative. Their tasks are however made totally worthwhile if any male appreciation is shown. I have noticed this at weddings or other important social events. All the women will be clustered together inside a house - two pounding peppers, two kneading flour, others preparing vegetables, and still others making rotlo. The atmosphere will be stifling and oppressive. Some gossiping may be going on, but in the main they are silent and grim in view of the task ahead, and some complaints do occur in this type of situation. However if just one man comes in and talks to them, asks them how they are, perhaps exchanges news and jokes, the atmosphere immediately changes. They smile for a long time afterwards, the air becomes lighter and they appear happy and contented in their work. The men do not realise the effect that they have on the women in such cases, when male evaluation of the female role acquires a positive element.

Women do not undervalue their own lives and achievements and there is a deep consciousness and pride of femaleness as a social state. Rare male recognition is seen to justify their own values however.

It is not however that male attitudes to their own work are very different from those reported for the female group. Their only

alleviation, is that they "know" that theirs is more prestigious than that of the "second sex".

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have described women, power and labour as they exist amongst a village of Kutchi Koli. I have illustrated the pattern of role segregation in agriculture and daily activities. I have sketched what makes a "good" husband and a "good" wife, and have emphasised the generally distinct evaluations of these roles by both sexes. Power and ownership have been identified, and attention has been given to informal means of influence and rule exceptions. Brief reference has been made to oppositional attitudes, world-view and the embeddedness of female reality. Reasons as to why they do not experience feelings of oppression, or express them, will be explored later in the thesis when we have developed a wider perspective of the Kutchi Koli.

PART TWO: WOMEN IN THE NATAL HOME

Introduction.

- 1) Early Differentiation.
- 2) Growing Up.
- 3) Men and Daughters.
- 4) Later Differentiation.
- 5) The Socialisation Process.
 - a) Caste.
 - b) Training.
- 6) End of Girlhood.
- 7) Kinship Bonds.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, I will deal with ties of kinship as they exist between women - the sibling bond, the maternal bond, and those of the natal village in general. It will include a perspective on the age process and associated gender differentiation, and emphasises important features of girlhood, socialisation and education.

1) EARLY DIFFERENTIATION

A male baby is the ideal in the society. From the commencement of pregnancy, other women talk about the boy which will be born, his naming ceremony and the associated feasting. Mothers became distressed if ever I referred to the forthcoming infant as "she" (due

incidentally to my faulty grammar at the beginning), and others present would immediately proclaim.

It will be a boy baby. What good is a girl? They will just get engaged (promised) and go away. A boy is with you always.

The mother herself will rarely refer at all to the child she is carrying. This is associated with their concepts of the "evil eye", and the harm more likely to befall if attention is drawn to someone. Rami, an unpopular young wife, used to boast loudly that her child would be a boy. He was, but it was a still-birth, and the women all thought that she had brought this upon herself.

If there are already many sons in the family, the situation is less urgent, and they are generally happy with a girl. The ideal is still maintained however. Men desire sons. Jama gave birth to four daughters and was beaten by her husband after the last one. All public opinion took her part saying that he was mad and fortunate to have any children at all - it being the result of Bhaqvan's beneficence and written in one's fate.

I will however quote two atypical remarks made during the research on the advantages of female children. Nena, flirtatious, young, married woman, already with two sons, and having just given birth to a daughter,

A girl is good for help in the home. What work will a boy do? Boys do very little work in the fields, but then always come to their parents for more and more money.

She spoke defensively and was probably justifying her new offspring.

The second remark was made by an older woman, perhaps also in justification because my sister-in-law had just produced a daughter.

A girl is good for a first baby; she can help with the housework, and look after the younger ones.

Certainly in the houses with no daughters, the mother was generally overworked, and the boys were obliged to share some of the more permissible female tasks. At the start of fieldwork I became

acquainted with a poor family in a neighbouring village consisting of the parents, four boys, two young girls and one baby boy. The mother was a strong woman, but had a struggle to keep them all clean and fed. By the time we left, the oldest daughter of six was able to assist her mother with many chores. The mother saying:

Pansi does lots of work at home now. She has to, because she is the only girl of any age to do so.

Boys will help their sisters if they seem to have too much work in the fields. They will cut grass for them to take home, making sure that their bundles are not too heavy. Both boys and girls will eagerly look after younger siblings - carrying them on the hip, and playing games.

A baby girl is simply washed, given some new clothes and an eventual name, whereas for a boy there is always an elaborate naming ceremony (sathi), and at Divari he has his first-cut hairlock dedicated to the zach goddess. It would not occur to them to have a celebration for a girl's birth, even if she were needed within the household. Both sexes when questioned looked incredulous - "It is not our custom." When twins are born, the response is the same.

Many people have two children at one time. Sometimes it is two girls and sometimes two boys. If it is two boys, then there is much celebration. If two girls, then they are just given names and that is all. If it is a boy and a girl, then the girl is left sleeping on the bed, while the boy goes through sathi and is made a great fuss over.

Generally, the boys notice that they are in the societally superior position before the girls perceive that their place is different. Although brothers are usually protective as regards their younger sisters, boys quickly realise that they can demand work and service from those older. Men are always served before women, and I remember with amusement an incident between two three year olds of the same household, who always used to play together. Being thirsty one mother poured a glass of water for them. The girl drank first, and passed it to her slightly younger kinsman. He threw aside the contents and refused to drink until the glass had been rinsed and fresh water given. He had learned the appropriate behavioural form.

The women present were astonished and amused by the speed of the change, as previously he had been content to share a glass.

Men claim that sons will look after them in their old age and be agricultural helpers meanwhile. There is prestige moreover in fathering sons. Women desire sons so that their wives will come and work for them. They admit that before marriage their own daughters do so, but this is perceived as transient. They will leave home, "Taken by the in-laws, such are our ways." Daughters-in-law will then replace daughters within the household, with the inevitable ensuing tensions.

Women state a preference for sons to begin with, and daughters-in-law for old age, rather than daughters at first and later no-one. In terms of the domestic cycle, a household will attempt to ensure that it always contains at least two working women. This may involve the later marrying of a daughter or the earlier marrying of a son.

2) GROWING UP

The early years for both boys and girls are spent in much the same way. Even clothing varies only slightly; girls wearing a type of dress top, as opposed to the boy's shirt style. However the trousers, modelled on the Sindi shalwar, are essentially the same.

Both boys and girls are also treated in much the same way. Boys may be fussed over and referred to by the term jado (bridegroom - an affectionate word for males from birth to death); but girls are also treated well and given much attention. A means of according respect to a wealthy man is by fussing over the children, noticeable because of their richer clothing.

Toddlers, naked, defecate wherever they happen to be, eat from their father's plate, and are considered to be outside the bounds of social restraint. Looked upon with tolerance and sympathy by adults

and older children, occasionally the latter appear disgusted by the youngsters' dirty, impure, animal-like behaviour.

When a baby is given a name (this can involve a long wait for a girl), it is introduced into the social world. Thereafter, if it dies, it will be accorded a burial. However, a gap of time is recognised to exist between naming and the full training of the young social animal. Parents show shame and anger if the child is behaving "improperly" at too late an age. Children from the age of about five are expected to leave the village to defecate. Previous to this, they relieve themselves on the dung/straw heaps behind the houses. They are also expected to wear clothes all the time, (many rich children do so before this stage) and to have developed more civilised eating habits.

Mothi was entertaining us to a farewell meal. His young children were all dipping into his food. Some were running around naked. He was very embarrassed and said,

They do not understand yet. Later, they will understand and wear clothes.

Out in the fields one day and unbeknown to his mother, young Nilo had cast off his trousers and was defecating upon the mud of the empty canal irrigation channel. She suddenly noticed, leapt up yelling, and lifted him from the place. Nilo cried at first surprised and ashamed, and later in rage. His elder brother who from afar had sighted his offence said, "What are you doing defecating in the canal?" The mother continued, "Yes, defecating where you are going to drink. We all drink from that water. What a thing to do. How dare you!"

With a hand-hoe she removed some mud from the canal bank, and loosely covered the offence, still muttering about drinking water. Nilo was sobbing, and she felt slightly apologetic by this stage. Wanting to justify herself however, she continued,

Now, put your trousers on. You know that your father would not let you do that either. People drink from there. How could anyone let their kids defecate there? All kids are severely beaten if they do that.

3) MEN AND DAUGHTERS

Men are said to attain heavenly reward for being good to their daughters, cows, Brahmans and Sadhu - perhaps not necessarily in this order. This may be the justification and in practice the daughters are treated very well by their fathers, who play with them for hours, bring them clothes, jewelry and sweets, and are less strict than the household women. Sometimes they accompany their fathers on trips to town, when they will be dressed in dress tops and shalwar instead of their traditional Kutchi clothes. This results in their not being immediately identifiable as low caste, and fathers thus find it easier in the present situation to take children rather than wives. The latter, being distinctively Kutchi Koli in appearance can prove an embarrassment.

In later years, fathers often protect daughters from maternal wrath and provide them with clothing and external desirable commodities. A father will do all in his power to protect her from other men as she gets older. Mostly feared are men from Sindi groups, who sometimes try to steal unmarried Hindu girls. This worry is constantly on a father's mind, as is the arrangement of a good and happy marriage for her. Most men are extremely upset when their daughter marries - crying, moody and troubled. How she will be treated in her new village is chiefly a matter of trust and fathers will disappear to the husband's home at the first sign of trouble. They realise there is little they can do however, which makes the maintenance of friendly links all the more essential.

When the father loses his daughter, he often gains the presence of a daughter-in-law, a woman whose face he must never see because of Kutchi avoidance practices and to whom he cannot directly talk. Thus the relaxed atmosphere of home life is transformed into a more tension-filled existence, overseen by his wife.

4) LATER DIFFERENTIATION

At approximately seven years, the sexes tend to drift apart. Boys accompany their fathers to the fields. Girls remain with mothers, sisters and babies. Women say that they are unable to control boys from this age and that they then need a father. Girls who have established a close bond with their fathers, find it difficult when this has to cease, because the child has become too old to accompany bapa (Daddy) on male occasions. The women then have to comfort a sobbing creature who is discovering that age may bring disadvantages.

Also at this age, girls start covering their heads. It generally begins as a form of play, an imitation of older females. However, they soon perceive it as an integral part of woman's life and they gain real fascination and pleasure from it. The women encourage them greatly in this, saying that the daughter has become, "A proper little girl." However it is necessary for a veil to be worn by the time of second teeth acquisition.

One of the most important tasks of a young wife, is to veil properly in front of the husband's elder male kin, and all Kutchi girls know this, and consider it a matter of pride and honour. New wives are watched carefully for example and for fault-finding. Mothers take a special pride in having their daughters, "Ready for marriage", in this way. The future in-laws of a ten year old girl came to the village for a visit. The girl veiled in front of them, which many other households found amusing. Not so her own household however, who were serious about the implications.

Of course she did. We have taught her what to do. Of course she cannot be married next year, what does she know? When she gets bigger, like Ganga, then we will marry her.

Work at this young stage involves the more menial cleaning tasks - animals, house, clothes, babies. The girl progresses to prestigious jobs when she is learning to be a wife - milking, churning, food preparation.

Throughout these stages, she learns the other basic arts of the female group in this society - sewing, singing, gossiping and story-telling. The younger a girl is, the more easily she can slip from household to household, gaining important pieces of information from each one. However, it is only when she is old enough to evaluate which information is really important and which is simply mundane, that she really comes into her element as a useful member of the household. Eleven or twelve appear to be the best years. Later there will be too much other work to do and by then having a semblance of womanhood and being treated increasingly as a person, it will prove difficult to hide unnoticed in a corner, observing all the proceedings.

Girls are therefore invaluable for carrying gossip between households. They are used as spies by their parents when neighbours argue and an astute girl can report word-perfectly the quarrel's contents. A particularly useful spying enterprise is upon an incoming wife by her husband's younger sister, who reports any untoward behaviour to her mother.

When hospitality is being offered in a certain house, girls can discover what is being given, so that it can be discussed, evaluated and rivalled by the rest of the community. New household acquisitions are generally espied firstly by girls. Powerful women in the village can then ask a daughter to fetch the item for them, without the possible shame of being prevented personally.

As mediators girls are important; bridging the gap after an argument so that face is not lost, whilst showing that one is prepared to resume social relations. The role is useful at official occasions, where men and women have to sit in separate houses, and girls exchange messages between their parents. Similarly, they are also able to inform an anxious young wife what her husband is doing.

Apart from this a girl is chiefly evaluated on the amount of physical work she can do for the household.

Yes, Zomi is a good girl - she can lift big bundles and do lots of washing.

5) THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS.

An important part of a Kutchi mother's life is spent teaching her children the appropriate ways to behave and react. The emphasis is always upon conformity, in terms of external symbols and internal attitudes. Those even slightly different are frowned upon, talked about or persuaded to change. This is especially true amongst the traditionally-minded female group, for whom innovation is seen as a threat. Men however always filter information before the women receive it and thus innovatory concepts are reduced to a minimum.

a) CASTE IDENTITY:

Socialisation is therefore conducted within a small-scale social and physical environment. External experiences are only partially reported by fathers or elder brothers. Any contact with non-Kutchi will be with those who occasionally enter the village - travelling beggars, a rare cloth or fruit seller, shoe or pot mender, Moslem landlords, or low-caste Moslem donkey owners removing manure. Excursions outside the village consist of visiting Kutchi kin, or attending Kutchi celebrations.

The child's basic early socialisation is therefore within a small, traditionally -minded, predominantly female group. As women are proud of their caste and culture, and have little (except filtered) experience of the outside world, (and therefore the group's lowly position vis-a-vis other peoples), they pass on these values to their children. Thus, children adopt wholesale the attitudes of the female group, expressing inordinate pride about the caste's clothes, eating habits and language.

Boys develop increasing contact with the world outside the village, with boys from other groups also herding animals, and with people in

town as they accompany the men on buying and selling expeditions. All this makes the young man realise that he is a member of the Kutchi Koli caste - just one of the many ethnic groups in Sind - some ranged higher, some lower on the caste scale. With a shock he discovers that he cannot drink his tea just anywhere, but must frequent a specific Kutchi Koli tea shop. He must use another language in order to communicate with shop-keepers and bus-conductors, and he will be laughed at because of his country ways and (supposedly) darker skin.

Such external attitudes and views of the "real" world cause him something of a dilemma; either he maintains his initial formative ideas of ethnic pride and identity or else he feels a new sense of shame for them and tries as much as possible to conform to the new world, keeping his home world hidden and separate. In other words he has a choice, which women do not. Many young men take the latter course. Older men, who have known or heard first-hand about pre-Partition times when Hindu/Moslem social position was reversed, tend to retain a feeling of pride in their group - a sense of humour that the world is so fickle in treating them as inferior when really they are superior. However this attitude can also be tempered with some shame or even bitterness.

Girls and women meanwhile remain in a relative state of ignorance concerning external practices. Whether the men conceal things from them intentionally or unintentionally is difficult to tell. Perhaps the very strain of going outside and suffering associated social pressures makes a man want to relax when he returns to the encapsulation of the village, and totally withdraw from the values of the outside world.

These basic differences in roles between boys and girls may account for somewhat opposing attitudes towards caste purity in later life. Boys, perhaps perceiving the arbitrariness in their own terms of the ideology, are much more tolerant of other groups. They do not worry about giving low caste men different cups (for example Bhil), and have been seen to drink with Moslems.

Girls and women are however horrified at such prospects. A frequently heard phrase from them is that, "We Kori do not...", followed by an example of their caste taboos, mainly in the eating, drinking, and marrying fields. Men may be heard to state these, but infrequently, and with much less conviction and emphasis.

One of the first questions women will ask of women from an unknown or undefined social group is whether they eat beef or whether they eat with Moslems. They cannot comprehend that other groups may refuse to eat out of their plates and imply that purity is throughout defined in Kutchi terms. (This will be explored more fully in chapter five.) Suffice it here to say that girls will frequently be heard to utter statements such as, "We do not drink with Parkari," or, "Who would drink with Parkari?" - expressing shock and horror at the prospect.

This difference in conceptualisation is hypothesised to be on account of the differences in socialisation of the sexes; that of girls being predominantly and increasingly under the auspices of the female group.

b) TRAINING:

From an early age, children learn the group mentality. They learn that everything they ever have will be shared, anything they ever do will be known. In a public society little escapes undetected and more or less any topic is liable for free discussion, at least within a single sex group.

Kutchi frown on parents who hit their children, especially those who do so to excess. Boys are beaten for offences perceived as serious, for example smoking or stealing. Girls are occasionally slapped, but rarely beaten; only for pre-marital sex, or pregnancy. The public stage favours the child in the case of punishment. An offending child will run to kin to escape its mother's wrath. The kin will then protect

the child and reason with the mother until she becomes calm.

The villagers perceive it beneficial to have at least one boy educated in the family. With the changed times, men see the advantages of a son having a linguistic and written knowledge of Sindhi.

There is no wish to have girls educated. Stories are filtered to them concerning girls who attend school in the nearest town. They are intrigued hearing about their books and uniforms, but perceive no use in it, thinking it simply a pastime of the rich. Girls wanting to learn to write are discouraged by their mothers, who demand their work at home.

"Here our boys do not receive enough schooling, so what is the point of our girls getting any?"

Or as the men said,

"What good is school for girls who are living in the wilds?"

6) END OF GIRLHOOD.

As marriage time approaches, the idea of work capacity becomes increasingly important. Girls are then defined in terms of how good a wife they will make; humility, strength, helpfulness and tact being the most desired virtues. Pre-marital girls become easily upset and angered by constant comparisons between themselves and other brides-to-be. Mothers worry that they have not taught them well enough and that they will be unhappy in their new village. Ideally, family honour is greatly at stake here, because a girl's bad or even non-conformist behaviour can reflect on the whole zach.

When asked if they liked to marry their daughters after their first menses, the women immediately replied in the affirmative. For example, Yes, you have to. Before that it is all right to play around, and hang about the fields and house, because they are just girls. But when menstruation starts, they have to go away. It has to be.

However, this may be the ideal, as examples of much earlier and much later habkan (engagements) were in evidence.

Breasts begin at twelve and menstruation at about fourteen. They usually do the habkan quite early but it is really up to the people involved. For example Jamu's (aged about eleven), was arranged when she was Rani's age (baby of about two), and the habkan was ages ago. She is only starting to do adult work now, but in a couple of years she might be ready. Ganga (1982 bride - about fifteen), was old when she went - her habkan had been three years before. Usually when they are old, they do the habkan in the summer and the wedding in the winter.

The older a girl becomes, the more her mind is taken up by her impending marriage and departure from the village. From her attitude can be observed signs of internal conflict. She hates the thought of marrying, leaving all the people she knows, settling in a completely strange village (perhaps far away), with her husband's household. She will rarely have been outside the village and never on her own. However she will have to do precisely this once the wedding ceremony is completed. Girls reflect this frightening prospect in their daily lives, saying that they are not getting married up to a few days before the event. Everyone knows the true situation, but the girls insist upon their fiction. They cling closely to their families and other girls in the same position. They become moody, irritable and tense, and argue within the family.

On the other hand, girls would never not want to get married. A girl recognises from an early age that her evaluation within the group depends chiefly upon her marital status. To gain power and prestige through their own households, or to attain full womanhood in the Kutchi female sense, depends upon the acquisition of a husband. Girls are then in many ways excited by the prospect of marriage. They are giggly and inquisitive, the thought of sex intrigues them, and they tell "rude" jokes whenever they find the opportunity to be alone with their peer group, for example when cutting grass.

Girls are to be seen, prior to their actual marriages, huddled with one other woman - usually sister or sister-in-law, being given last minute advice about sex and the wifely role. This talk is never given

by the mother. Bearing children is the most essential expectation by both sides from marriage, and as one mother said beforehand to her embarrassed daughter - "Of course you will have lots of children. Why shouldn't you?"

As women go through a rite de passage upon marriage, and re-emerge, although low in terms of the status hierarchy, with a great new potentiality, their concerns will not be the character of their husbands. Such thoughts appear not to worry them. The most important concerns are what their mothers-in-law will be like and whether they will have a large amount of work. Older women however tend to express preference for a man who will be kind, faithful and help with the children.

At the pre-marital stage, girls do not however maintain such ideals. This is because it is a man, any man, who can endow them with the desired marital status. For the associated boy, this new marital status and prestige is not so evident in his own village, where he will probably on the contrary be teased. Therefore, for boys it is much more of a concern as to what their future wives will be like - whether light or dark skinned, whether strong or suffering from physical impediment. Boys could frequently be heard to talk on this subject and young married men would remember their past worries, and how relieved they had been when they discovered that their parents had not procured them a bad wife after all. Nevertheless, whenever their marriages are discussed prior to the occasion, boys laugh and appear confident and superior.

Girls, in opposition, blush, become immediately shy, hide behind their veils and pretend to ignore the conversation. From an early age however, they have knowledge of their future husband's name. Younger girls will tease each other by saying these names, whereupon the game deteriorates into giggling, embarrassed little heaps of womanhood.

This is seen as an expression of the differing male and female perceptual realities. Girls define themselves in terms of the group,

whereas boys see themselves as individuals. Women in this situation see men as oppositions in providing the essential complementarity for marriage.

7) KINSHIP BONDS.

Ideally, the kinship link is stronger than the affinal. Emotionally, this is often the case, especially between people of the same sex. The marital bond does threaten this however, as men frequently show preference for wives to sisters, and those women long-married prefer husbands to brothers. On the other hand, although the marital bond in some cases appears stronger, friction will often occur within it because of other kinship ties.

When setting up home in her affinal village, a young bride is given some utensils by her own mother. The amount is a matter of honour, prestige and wealth. Through what is given, the girl is seen by her new community to have a rich mother who has much affection for her, or else the opposite. Thus, families try hard to provide these symbols and disinterested fathers are nagged by moping wives until the obligations are at least in some measure fulfilled.

After approximately a year of marriage, a milk-giving animal is sent from mother to daughter by means of a son. The brother/sister bond is not as strong here as that expressed in most of the Indian ethnography, and as with marriage, depends upon the characters of the individuals concerned. There are few necessary rites and obligations. Generally, a brother will attempt to ensure that his sister is well treated by her husband, especially in the first few years of marriage. This task usually falls to a younger sibling who, being more prone to travel, visit, and acquire society's information, is the one most likely to know if something is wrong with the marriage. He is a safety-valve and protector for the young wife and many such women who are unhappy rely heavily upon their brothers. Brothers should remain on good terms with the sister's husband, thus attempting to ensure good treatment

of the bride through the obligations of friendship, if those of affinity are proving tenuous.

The sister has certain ritual obligations in turn. She must give clothes when her brother's wife has a son, and she has an important role in his sathi. She sometimes looks after her brother's children, as much out of pleasure as a sense of duty, and she usually enjoys close ties with the family. Wife and husband's sister are generally close - at least on the surface. The sister is free to enter the wife's home whenever she likes. These two categories of women rarely argue (unusual amongst Kutchi women), and if there is trouble between the families, they usually attempt a reconciliation. The onus is upon the younger woman not to disagree, especially if she is the affine. She is also the peacemaker in cases of mild friction or inter-familial strife.

For example, one day Netha's young daughter-in-law came in late from picking the cotton, tired and unusually bad-tempered. In the neighbouring house lived her mother-in-law's brother and wife, their children, and one adult son and his very new wife. An argument ensued between Netha's daughter-in-law, Shasti, and Khano, the neighbouring adult son. She uncharacteristically was reported to have said that he slept with his mother - a societally rude and shocking statement. (See also Ridd, 1981, in this context.) Khano, this time in character, furiously threatened her physically. He was restrained and led away by some other men. Shasti, meanwhile, received a serious scolding from her mother-in-law. The latter believed that she may have said these terrible things, despite the fact that she had not been present, and Shasti denied it all vehemently. It was decided that Shasti's husband would deal with her and Khano later. Meanwhile, Netha, the younger woman, went to attempt a reconciliation with her sister-in-law, Khano's mother. They were soon to be seen laughing and joking together. When Shasti's young husband arrived home, he surprisingly took his wife's side, saying - "Khano is mad. He imagined it all. Everyone knows what he is like."

Sisters generally respect their brothers, even those younger than themselves. If the latter visit their sister in her affinal village they are fussed over, given nice things to eat and drink, and are accorded a privileged position. One woman would sleep on the floor when her younger brother came to visit, so that he could sleep on a bed beside her husband, "What else can I do? We have only one bed, and he is my brother."

Lending and borrowing basically take place through kinship links. These may or may not be reciprocal, depending upon the relative wealth of the parties involved. A rich man is expected culturally to give and to give generously. Whether or not return is made depends largely upon whether his kinsman is poor or requires a further, larger loan. Ideally, poor men cannot be expected to look after themselves or their families adequately and require help from others more fortunate. What a rich man loses materially, he gains from power and prestige. What a poor man gains materially, he loses in pride and self-esteem.

Everyone is traced in terms of kinship and accordingly placed in the appropriate kin category. Hours may be spent ensuring that this is assessed with relative accuracy when a stranger is first introduced. Such elaborate categorising is generally carried out by older members of the community, who have most time, interest, and patience for such things.

When asking a favour, or if feeling somewhat unpopular with the person concerned, great emphasis is placed on the kin term. With this emphasis on proximity, the person being addressed ideally must comply with the request, or at least not refuse outright. Popular assessment of "right" in a case will also usually be conditioned by the proximity of kinship. A frequent response when defending the action of someone is to say, "Well, he is her brother," or "That is her sister though". In this way, obligations are often built up through kinship links. These

ties are generally reciprocal, but in certain areas of social life prove more binding than in others. For example, at weddings, births, and funerals, close kin are obliged to help and may indeed have certain ritual roles to fulfil. During the preparations for two village girls' weddings, these ideals became readily apparent.

One mother had many kinship links within the village and her house was always full of women to help her. The other mother had no kin of her own in the village - although her husband had a mother, mother's brother, and younger brother. She was very upset, because hardly anyone came to help with their wedding preparations. She was especially hurt, as she had asked her husband's younger brother's wife to come, who lived in the neighbouring house and generally belonged to the same small social network. The wife said that she could not help as she was too tired, being heavily pregnant at the time. She did however add insult to injury by going the distance to the household of the other wedding and assisting there, where an older sister was the bride's mother.

The mother/son bond is ideally strong and a mother sets great store by her sons, expecting them to look after her in old age, and generally help the family economically at present. The only person able to thwart this ideal state of affairs is the son's wife and hence the resulting tensions between both categories of women. Mothers will lament their "lost" sons and even disown them if things become very serious. Fathers will rage and say that their son prefers to eat with his wife rather than his father - a profound insult.

As we have seen, insults are often hurled in kinship terms, with especial reference to incest. A man will be said to have "married his mother", or to "have intercourse with his sister". These insults are generally given by women to men, or by men to men. I have never heard a similar use referring to women. (See again Ridd 1981, for similar examples of the means women can use to denigrate men.)

CONCLUSION

In this part, I have focussed briefly upon women as kinsfolk, relationships within the natal family, and associated attitudes. It was felt relevant here to dwell upon the young girl as she first perceives her kin and the world around her through the socialisation process. In this way, attitudes formative in her development have been described and we have acquired a fuller picture of the meaning of kinsfolk and fellow women to a Kutchi Koli woman. Home is seen at first in direct opposition to the stranger village of the husband. The wifely role, which will be examined in the next part, is seen as the next stage in the life process. Throughout however, whatever her economic and political position "on the ground", and whether she has any links of solidarity with other women, her perceptual solidarity is at one with them. She sees herself and her life, as one defined by womanhood in the society and as such in opposition to manhood, fatherhood, brotherhood, or husbandhood.

PART THREE: WOMEN IN THE AFFINAL HOME

Introduction.

- 1) The Wedding Ritual.
- 2) Transition.
- 3) The Mother-in-Law.
- 4) Avoidance.
- 5) Kin and Affines.
- 6) Marital Differences.
- 7) Assimilation and Marital Compatibility.
- 8) Widows and Widowers.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, I will explore the position of Kutchi women as wives. I will provide a short description of the wedding ceremonies, with specific reference to the essential role of women in the proceedings, and there will follow an exploration of wifhood, from its early stages of transition to the later ones of assimilation.

1) THE WEDDING RITUAL.

Weddings occur in the cold season, with much preorganisation and ritual, perhaps because they are a predictable life-cycle event. From the time of a Kutchi child's birth, its father will start viewing tentatively the possibilities of a future partner. Intermediaries will be used, often trusted fellow villagers of different lineages, who will have

contacts with their kinsmen in other villages. Suitable candidates will later be explored properly. Visitors will arrive to view them and their families, judging their appearance, wealth, life-style, contacts and characters. This is predominantly male business, especially when choosing a groom. Women are little concerned in early marriage arrangements, although their menfolk are well aware of their tastes as to the future daughter- or son-in-law. In the case of a bride, her proposed husband's elder male relatives must never see her face, and therefore much use is made of the wedding go-between, and of affinal males - sisters' husbands and daughters' husbands - whom she does not have to avoid. The prospective mother-in-law will generally visit when plans are definite.

Once the decision as to a suitable match has been more or less agreed by both parties, a kaskala rite will take place, involving men from the groom's side going to the bride's home and presenting her father with a small monetary token. This is the official initiatory wedding rite and if it is accepted the young people will be referred to as, "so-and-so's wife", or "husband". It is rare and disapproved of to retract from such an agreement, "A promise has been made."

There may be a gap of months or years before the next step, which is the habkan rite, again conducted by males - firstly in the groom's father's village, then in the bride's. This involves the sharing of rock sugar and is the official engagement, preferably the year preceding the actual wedding. The date of the latter will usually be settled on neutral ground in the town by a literate expert in astrological charts. It is written on paper and known as the lagan. The men bring it back to the village, where the women take up their part.

The domain of the village symbolically belongs to the women: theirs is the emphasis upon tradition, stability, the integrity of the Kutchi as a people, and upon their own group as a unique group. Whereas men are mediators, travellers, exchangers and communicators, women express the opposite poles. Not for them the rituals in other villages, the

alliances, the interaction with other groups. Women stress Kutchi traditions and life-styles but not beyond the two groups of which they form part during their lives. The demands of women's values, necessitate ignorance of the outside and of other groups - stereotyping, the emphasising of rifts and separations. As the women join as a group to perform the wedding rituals, they form an angry and active opposition to the complementary female group performing similar rituals in a different village - and later in the same one. Such insularity breeds prejudice, it also breeds remarkable in-group solidarity.

In terms of organising, structuring, and providing the bones of the rituals, men are responsible. The women provide the flesh for the bones and the order to the unarrangeable. Now with the wedding preparations underway, they assemble in groups, as units, to express both their conceptual solidarity and their own essential contribution to the Kutchi Koli scheme of things. They enact all the internal rites for the bride and groom. They sing the wedding songs pre-dawn and post-dusk every day for the prescribed period until the wedding. As a group they prepare for the lolra feast on the evening the jagan is returned to the village. (See photographs 7 and 8) A woman, who is ritually thought of as a "potter", makes the clay model of the elephant god (Ganesh), in front of which the bride and groom will have to sit in their respective villages for a transitional period.

Through their singing at such times, and through their preparations of both bride and groom, the women enact and maintain not only the world-view of their own group, but of the whole Kutchi Koli people. Their knowledge and pride stems from an embeddedness in ethnic identity and it is context and experience which provides meaning to the complementary male and female structures.

While sitting in front of Ganesh, the couple are in a marginal/liminal period, symbolising their rite de passage. They are not permitted to bathe until the day of the last ceremonial phase and they have to sit and sleep on the floor, as they must never be higher than the god. They cannot wander freely around the village or outside. They must be

accompanied everywhere by assistants - close same sex kin of roughly the same age, usually siblings - unmarried in the bride's case, married in the groom's. The couple are referred to as "king" and "queen" during this period.

Throughout, it is perpetually evident that a wedding is a group rather than an individual phenomenon. Stress is placed on the fact that, "We are having a wedding". The name of the individual may be used to signify whose actual turn it is. The individuals themselves however are not given much thought or attention, except within the bride's household, where there is grief and expressed emotion.

The final encirclement ceremony is held in the village of the bride. The groom's party, the zan, accompanies him, and consists of close male and female kin and affines. His women sing him through an arch of banana palms at the village entrance with such songs as, "We have come to take away a bride."

Self-conscious in his function-specific princely clothes, he is taken to sit with his women and attendants in an uthak far away from the house of the bride. Once inside the village, the conceptual opposition between external/them and internal/us, is transformed into opposing parts of the village itself. It is men who usher the visitors to their place, who greet and provide for them, and carry out all the practicalities in the host village - erecting the banana platform and preparing all the food for the feast. (See photograph 10) They maintain the structure of the ceremonies - place, time, and external dimensions.

Women carry out the internal practices, chiefly in the symbolic realm, involving emphasis upon the family, the group, the home, the inside of the village. They are the ones who perpetually express almost hatred for the groom's party women, as a disruption of their daughter's continuity in hearth and natal home. Shaking their heads sadly and somewhat angrily they would say, "What can we do? It is the in-laws, they have come to take our daughter." Women, although always perceiving in the form of the female group, oppose women.

They do not oppose the men, who act as mediators. They do, however, realise the role men are playing - this connivance with the opposite faction - and this recognition is expressed in certain ritual songs from wife to husband, where she, wailing and angry, blames him for letting their daughter leave and he, in grief, protests his innocence.

In the allocated uthak, the groom sits uncomfortably, surrounded by his attendants and female party. The women are fed fairly quickly. The groom however does not receive any food for many hours - a form of teasing, aggression, and also pretence at ignoring his presence by the bride's people. Their aim is to neglect him as much as is feasible. He appears embarrassed but resigned. His male helpers are teasing him with sexual innuendo about his preparedness for marriage.

The separateness of the two camps is emphasised throughout the night with the various rites that are performed. At certain times, a group from the bride's house go through the village to the groom and offer his representative prestations, which are reciprocated in gesture if not in kind. The timing is worked out by the men, the content by the women. The actual produce is borne and offered by an affine of the bride - elder sister's husband, or father's sister's husband. A group of women accompany him, symbolically detaching themselves from the gifting, and singing abusive songs to the groom and his party; not for them contact, mediation, or reciprocity.

Your mother has left you?
Your "stick" will grow long,
As in my town of Nagar,
ghi is cheap.

Little village girls will dash along to the other house and peer at the groom through the darkness, trying to decide what he looks like under all the elaborate clothing, and then reporting their findings back to home base with giggling and excitement.

The groom's party women will maintain their distinctiveness, commenting as to the house they have been allocated, discussing the standard of hospitality, grading the quality of the food for volume, fat and taste, and generally bringing forth any gossip they may have

heard about the village and its inhabitants.

In the early hours of the morning, clothes and jewelry are brought to the bride's house by two or three of the groom's closest female kin, usually his mother amongst them. The bride is woken up, if sleeping, and her new marital jewelry put on. She veils all the time her affines are present, showing them similar respect to that which she will shortly pay to her husband's elder male kin. The affinal women are generally comforting at this stage, knowing some of the ordeal she must be suffering. They tease her pleasantly, asking for things to put her at her ease, and try to make her unveil by saying,

Let us just have a glimpse of your face. Let us see our new wife. There is no reason to be shy, hasn't she often cooked rotlo for me and given them to me.

This teasing and temptation does not however succeed, as the young bride knows that her role is to be a shy, modest, impassive one.

The rite of the breaking of the saltpot by the groom at the village gate, means that in actuality and symbolically he will be allowed in, (both village entrance and virginal hymen); so the marriage can proceed. The bride's women begin to dress her inside the house. First they wrap the long white cloth brought by the affines around her skirt and her shoulders like a sari. Her veil remains underneath, totally covering her facial features. Her size and the line of the cloth make her resemble the Ganesh effigy she has been sitting beside. She wears her new marital jewelry gifted by the affines.

Meanwhile, the women of the groom's party are already seated singing in the cold and darkness behind the banana palm platform. The bride is escorted to take a chair to the right side of the central palm, the groom is on the left. The bride's father's zamai (sister or daughter's husband) ties them together by means of a long white cloth attached to both their "cloaks". The bride's women sit directly behind her on a mat, (the same one as already inhabited by the groom's women), but spatially distinct and segregated. Both groups sing different and opposing songs. (See photograph 9)

A substitute "Brahman", (often an affine of the bride's father), burns ghi at the base of the central pole, and chants. The couple proceed extremely slowly round the pole four times in anti-clockwise direction. The bride is usually supported by a brother as she follows her husband in the reputed enactment of the Rama/Sita tale. The groom is taunted by the bride's young male kin to either laugh or look round. The former is thought dishonourable and if he does the latter the marriage is supposedly cursed.

They return to opposite seats from which they had started and the singing women change places also. The couple are untied and the mothers perform vadav, the special rite that accompanies many Kutchi ceremonies and is said to symbolise the greeting of a king. It contains strong fertility overtones, however. (The rite necessitates a married woman holding a winnower, containing a type of grain, some dates, a saucer of ghi and a brass pot of water. First she makes a tili mark of ghi on the forehead of the person to be greeted, by means of her veil which has been dipped by her right hand in the ghi. Keeping her hand on the forehead, she pours the water to her right and to her left. Then, she circles a date above her head and throws it away. She repeats this three times, until the dates have been thrown in the four compass directions. Next, she tosses a handful of grain over the person. The final part is the cracking of her knuckles loudly against her temples.)

A few hours later, in the morning, the village women congregate in the bride's house. The atmosphere is heavy and sorrowful, many of the women close to the bride are already sobbing. When the zan are heard coming up the village, the sobs grow stronger and louder. As soon as the ^{zan}_^ start singing under the banana palms, those inside can begin to prepare the bride. This is done by young wives, who have recently experienced it all themselves. She has her hair oiled and combed. She is chastely undressed and dressed again in the clothes of a married woman, brought in the night by the affines. Her wails are deep and heavily ritualised. Most brides are experiencing real grief at this point, which is expressed in the appropriate female mode. The mother is told

by an older woman to rise and say goodbye to her daughter. She does so with much wailing and everyone in the room is emotionally affected. The other women then all come forward to hug the bride ritually, veils down, all sobbing.

Outside, the bride is once again attached to the groom by the cloth and she follows him out of the village in procession, with the accompanying women singing opposing songs. At the arch near the village entrance, they are untied and the groom and his party go outside to wait. Again expressing male external nature, the men of her family now come to say farewell. This too is a highly emotionally charged affair. Often the father himself does not come. They claim that it is because the grief is too much, especially for a first daughter.

There is a period of greeting between some of the groom's close female kin and those of the bride - as if, because the proceedings are almost complete, they can afford to recognise each other's existence, and in fact become civil because now the families are allied through marriage.

All the farewells having been said, the bride is taken outside the village by helpers and passed on to her female affines. She looks round a few times at the village and people she is leaving, and usually has to be gestured by those remaining to proceed. On the way to the groom's village, the women of the zan will sing that they have now got the bride. The latter meanwhile, will continue sobbing under her veil.

The couple are again ritually greeted on entry to the groom's village (yaday), where some amusing rites are undergone, apparently to make the bride feel more at ease in the strange environment. She is usually too terrified to participate however, embarking on this new phase of life which is nevertheless integral to the experience of every Kutchi female.

2) TRANSITION

The bride has to remain on her own in the groom's village for three days on this initial visit. The couple do not have sexual intercourse at this first stage. On the first day, she sits in the inner room of the affinal house before the Ganesh model, wearing her full marital jewelry - bracelets, heavy necklace shaped like a nipple, and nose-ring. Initially the hamlet women, and later those from the rest of the village, come to view the bride. She sits there modestly, eyes downcast and expressionless. She should not smile, laugh or speak, as these are all signs that she may prove insolent or a flirt. The women walk around her, looking at her face, teeth, eyes, colouring and clothes. Her mother-in-law, meanwhile, struts around boasting - "Haven't I got a good wife then? How about this one? Isn't she light-skinned? Isn't she fat and strong?"

The women having viewed this new village acquisition depart, often in envy to their own homes, dreaming of the day that their eldest son will get a wife - what a holiday that will be. For many weeks after the wedding, people will tease the mother-in-law about her associated lack of work. With her wife in the house, she will reputedly be able to lounge around on beds all day long. Whether there is this change in her life-style, depends upon the respective characters, household composition, and its male attitudes. Generally, if the wife succeeds in gaining the support of her young husband, she will manage to do less work. If she does not, and her parents are not rich and influential, she will have to take on practically all the female household labour, apart from the prestigious tasks that her mother-in-law specifically enjoys.

In her first few days' stay in the village however, she will not have to work hard, although she will claim that she has had to when she returns home. The main purpose at this stage is to learn to live away from home, to find out about the village, the household and her new affines. This can prove traumatic for a young girl who has so rarely left her own village, and never alone, and she eagerly counts the days

until a close male relative comes to take her to her natal home again. The affines provide lavish hospitality for the bride's menfolk, who leave happy and well-filled.

From the time she re-enters her home village, the bride undergoes a transformation. Gone are the sad, lonely days spent in the strange village. A married woman now arrives, wearing shiny new clothes of expensive cloth, full jewelry, unveiled and radiant. She has endured her adventure and now she returns, a triumphing heroine, for a whole month. She is treated with a new respect by people amongst whom she has grown up and whom she knows so well. Here she can relax and forget about the strains of conformity essential for a new wife. She has her clothes admired, younger girls look at her with envy, older women are eager to listen to all her stories, laugh and sympathise. Around the fireside at nights, she is the focal point of attention, all women eager to know about her experiences.

She will respond in the accepted ideal mode; boasting as to the amount of work undertaken; telling of how well she wept; stating how cruel and demanding the mother-in-law was. Of her husband, she will blush, giggle a little, turn away, and then say quickly, "Oh, he is all right. A bit dark-skinned I suppose, but he has protected me from his mother." All the women will then smile approvingly at the boy's reputed helpfulness and consideration, forgetting what their attitudes would be if they were grooms' mothers. ("All wives are bad, they turn sons against their mothers").

Gossip is exchanged and the bride becomes truly a part of the female group, a person in her own right, someone who has to be taken into consideration as one who has shared their experiences, but who now has to depart to endure a life-time away from her zach group.

In her natal home she enjoys a freer life. She is able to sit on beds, eat more, have more choice in what is to be cooked, and in general attain something of the status of an adult. She is able to oppose her mother and talk to the family males on more equal terms.

During this month at home, she does less work outside the village than before. It appears that she is being sheltered and kept pure - essential as she is still in a period of transition - being married but still a virgin.

The rite de pasage undergone by a woman can be seen to be substantial and definite - location, physical appearance, and social position. The groom however undergoes no such changes. While the bride is being viewed by the women, he does tour every household greeting the men, but there is little else to symbolise his change of status (same village, clothes and life-style), although he may be accorded more respect from his wife's kin. His father is still in command and his contemporaries more often tease him than show him respect. This is a difficult period for him, between boyhood and fatherhood, and some find problems in adapting. In addition, he has to show his young wife early on who is in charge of the relationship, or his perceived manhood will suffer.

As the first year of marriage progresses, the young wife spends longer and longer periods of time at her husband's village, and shorter and shorter ones at her natal home. This is chiefly to reconcile two conflicting principles: 1) The girl is a person and cannot without extreme difficulties leave everything she has ever known in a single step: 2) The girl, from almost every angle, is a commodity, a possession, which has been transferred from one zach to another, and is now lost to the former group.

The former concept has to be taken account of, but is formally ignored in popular ideology. People talk of the clean break which is made at the wedding ceremony, the irreversible step. The build up to the event, the communal sorrow, the void that is left when she leaves, all combine to make it appear that this is forever. It is admitted only reluctantly and with bad grace that the bride will return in three days for a month at home. The family are not comforted by such a prospect, although they would object violently if it were proposed that they forsake it. For them her time at home is finished. She will from

now on be just a visitor, one who belongs to another community. Very soon most of her allegiances will change towards that community.

On a personal level, she will be sadly missed by family and friends. However, pragmatically she is gone and all their wedding rites make this abundantly clear. During the first year, she will have to help in both households at times of economic necessity. This results in her being accompanied backwards and forwards between the two villages, where her agricultural and domestic labour are at a premium, being young and strong, with as yet no children. The times set for both villages are initially within an ideal pattern, revolving around the important festivals. Household illness may affect this pattern however.

3) THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

The period before her first baby - in some cases her first son - resembles a probation stage for the young wife. She has to work hard, with a pleasing, diligent manner, and must respect convention. Women claimed that in the "old days", mothers-in-law were more strict - beating the wife, and not allowing her to speak or eat in front of the female household head. These days, matters are reputedly very different - wives can wear nice clothes, and talk within the household. Older women state that this is no improvement, and decry falling standards.

The actual situation is dependent upon individual character. The mother-in-law in the neighbouring house was so strong that she succeeded in having her "wife" work all the time, and prevented her from having any other social contacts. If she was seen anywhere near any other woman, she would immediately be called away, and the mother-in-law would check the content of the conversation with the other person. This woman was regarded as somewhat of a tyrant by the rest of the village and used to dominate her husband and sons. However, it is generally the case that the new wife must be circumspect and simply wait for a lessening of her load when her

husband's younger brother marries.

This was not the case in another household, where the new wife came from a rich family and the father-in-law disliked his wife, as did the son. Thus, the men supported the young wife against the mother-in-law, the former woman refusing to do work that she did not like, and enjoying a relatively easy existence within the household.

Similar situations sometimes resulted where a husband lived uxorilocally. This was more acceptable in the host village because of the ownership of land. The wife is obviously more happy in her home surroundings and some young men are prepared to leave their natal villages if land is inferior there. People concede these points in its favour, but most do not believe it a good thing to live with the wife's family. They claim that the wife would be disobedient and run riot, and that even if a misguided husband accepted this arrangement there would follow profound problems.

If he gets ill, no-one will help him and feed him. No-one will give him any money, or look after him properly.

Two examples of similar situations within the village serve to emphasise this point. The first concerns a young couple I knew very well. She was very unhappy in the village and expressed this at every opportunity. She constantly sulked or actively argued with the other household women, whenever she felt that she had too much work to do, (which was frequently, as the household head was a wealthy man and entertained often). Her husband was very fond of her and took her side in everything, basically because he disliked his own kin. He went as far as to help her with specifically female tasks in the fields, when she was ostracised by the rest of the women, and he also ate with her in preference to his father - totally opposing Kutchi values. Her aim was to persuade him to return to her natal village to live, and to this end, she ignored all gossip, angry advice and the generally sufficient modes of social control.

She maintained the support of her parents in all domestic arguments, but not where it came to returning to live with them.

They were happy to have married her into a powerful household. Thus, after many deceitful acts on the part of the couple, she managed to have part of her wish fulfilled; that of leaving the village. However, it was not at her natal home they were to settle, but in the village of another of her husband's elder kinsman - the man who had arranged their marriage. Although therefore the husband supported his wife in most things, this was halted at the stage of living uxorilocally, and public opinion was unanimously behind him in this.

The second case involves a man who was actually living in the woman's village. In some respects perhaps he had no option, as he had been officially married to someone else, but his first wife had left him. The second woman's father had no sons of working age and the daughter was a young widow. Second marriages are generally very expensive for Kutchi men, but the father agreed to give him the widow in exchange for his labour.

The daughter, extremely flirtatious by Kutchi standards enjoyed the arrangement, with the resulting freedom it gave her within the natal village. They were also at first highly attracted to one another. The wife's position was similar to that of older married women with children, in that she could choose her chores, and indulge in leisurely social activities. It was with the husband that strains appeared. He would quarrel with his affines, and complain that he was not being allocated a fair proportion of the household resources. They accused him of being lazy and vain. The wife would often be insolent, refusing to cover her head (even if it embarrassed him in public), or to bring him a glass of water, or to return from another house when he told her that her young baby was crying. Her parents supported her in all matters, as the villagers had predicted would happen in such a case.

These cases are however somewhat exceptional. To us the probationary period for most young wives would appear very hard. She is constantly being viewed by the mother-in-law to ensure that she is working sufficiently; not gossiping about household business; practising avoidance; showing proper respect to older women; treating the younger

children well; maintaining her sexual purity by keeping at a safe distance from all men; and refraining from anything that could possibly be interpreted as flirtatious. Within a few months, female eyes begin to stare pointedly at her stomach, and tongues to ask where the baby is. The successful delivery of a child radically changes the status of the wife in the affinal village and presents her with much more security and stability.

4) AVOIDANCE

A woman has to avoid those men to whom she is affinally related, but not permitted to marry. The Kutchi form of leviratic/sororatic marriage stipulates that as a widow, a woman can marry her husband's younger brother, but never the elder, whom she has always had to avoid. A man can marry his wife's younger sister, but never the elder to whom he has to show respect. Younger marriageable categories can ideally enjoy a joking relationship, although in practice this mainly occurs whilst one partner remains unmarried.

Avoidance rules involve the woman's face never being permitted to be seen by the appropriate male categories; showing respect by never sitting on a bed when the man is present; never initiating conversation and only replying briefly if he addresses her; sitting on the floor with her back towards him on most occasions; and (as with husbands and wives), never using names as terms of reference.

Although the institution is said purely to denote respect, women are much more concerned with transgressions and its maintenance than the men themselves are. I have stated in chapter two the political aspects of avoidance stressed by Sharma (1978c). Certainly it serves this purpose, but its symbolism and perceived value are deeply embedded within the female group, and the externally obvious political implications are not relevant to them.

It is difficult to work when veiled. Although the cloth is of a light fabric - so that it is relatively easy to see out, but not to look in - women find themselves unable to perform most work activities with the veil down. Thus in many respects, it appears a complicated business, the lifting backwards and forwards with the constant worry as to whether someone to be avoided is in proximity. Most women living in a household where there are men to be avoided will retain one hand perpetually at the corner of their veil, in order quickly to cover their faces when necessary.

Women themselves admitted to me as an outsider that veiling is difficult and can be a problem. However, and this is important, no-one young or old would ever say that they did not like it as a custom. They all perceived it a very necessary part of their lives and something all women have to do whilst young. Older women one might expect to feel this way, having few to avoid and it being seen as a means of control over the young wife. However, the younger women also thought it was an essential part of life and to them it was an integral mark of femaleness - the very definition of self and position in society. The concept of people who did not have such customs was to them intolerable, hence their attitude towards the Sindi Moslems.

Well of course they never have to suffer as we do. They just marry their kin, and remain in the same village. They would not know what it is like.

This disparagingly spoken comment was made with reference to the grief experienced by a Kutchi young bride when leaving the natal home, but similar comments were made about the veiling customs of other groups, always illustrating the pride of Kutchi females in their own customs and practices. About their veiling rules, it was said, "Let it be a bother. So what if it is difficult to do work."

Men regard the custom with amusement and tolerance, although the younger amongst them, tend to adopt a more questioning attitude towards it. Many express curiosity as to the appearance of a new wife, and some seem embarrassed rather than proud, when they realise

what a nuisance their arrival becomes to an avoiding wife. Husbands help their wives in some cases, telling them when an elder brother is approaching, moving to another part of the hamlet where the wife has more freedom, or sitting blocking her view from the elder relation at family gatherings. One man built up the uthak wall outside the house, so that he and his wife could sleep there. This resulted in her not having to go to bed later and rise earlier than all the men she had to avoid, to prevent them seeing her upon a bed.

Although ideally, men never see behind this veil, accidents do, of course, occur. I witnessed two happenings of this nature. Both parties on each occasion were immediately overcome with embarrassment once they realised what had happened and it was the men who beat a hasty retreat. Nothing more was said about either case.

In general, the onus is upon the man to behave circumspectly and with politeness towards a woman who is avoiding him. He must cough when he is approaching the vicinity. He must remain constantly on the look-out, in order to prevent embarrassing situations. Just as it is up to men not to go behind the house to urinate when a woman might be taking a bath there; not to be seen working with another man's wife alone in the fields, even when children are present; and not to enter a woman's house when her husband is absent; so, when it comes to avoidance, much of the responsibility to avoid mutual embarrassment is carried on male shoulders.

Women must, of course, always be prepared to avoid, but a polite man has to be constantly aware and obliging. He has to note what clothes the women who avoid him wear, (even new acquisitions), so that they can be recognised at a glance, despite lack of facial characteristics. He must note where they have been last and where they are likely to be going, so that he does not turn a corner and catch them unawares.

It is only where lack of avoidance or respect on the part of the woman seems deliberate, or lax, that public action is taken, generally

on behalf of the man by one of "his" women - wife, mother, sister, or wives of his brothers or sons.

For example, Mali, Arjan's wife, was one day heard shouting outside her house about her husband's elder brother's son's wife, who had not been veiling and showing proper respect to the former's husband's mother's brother - especially as the latter's wife was away from home at the time. The offending wife was forbidden to come into Mali's uthak and many other women joined to condemn her vocally. The young wife had been combing her hair (her head was totally uncovered), where she could be seen by the old man. She probably had her back towards him, but this did not mitigate her crime. As the women explained to me later,

You Angres (whites) may not follow this custom of avoidance, but we do. It is very important to us. From a very early age, we are told what to do, and we always have to be on the look-out for our husband's elder relatives. We have to do our hair, and other such things in the house, in case anyone is about. This afternoon was really shocking, and it is Mali's duty to take her to task about it. Her husband's mother's brother had seen his sister's son's son's wife, and had reported to Mali and the other women of the household about this disrespect.

This case was somewhat anomalous, as it concerned the afore-mentioned young wife who was so keen to leave the village that she flouted many traditional values. Avoidance is not usually treated so lightly and with such apparent disrespect. On the other hand, if she had not caused so much trouble in the household beforehand, the old man would probably have overlooked this incident and nothing would have been said, as in the case of genuine accidents.

5) KIN AND AFFINES.

Excluding differentiation by sex, and woman's automatic subordinate status, ideally the kinship link is one of equality, and the marital link one of inequality. Although it rarely happens, it is theoretically possible for a man to eat with his sister, and for her to eat out of the plates he has used. This is not possible within the marital

relationship and husbands and wives cannot share the same glasses, cups or plates, without their having been washed first. Drinking out of the same cup denotes a kinship link, and men who are great friends can become "milk brothers", by sharing milk from the same glass.

Kutchi men talk freely about the possibility of eating with their sisters. Eating with wives however is seen as shocking and unthinkable. Wives always eat after their husbands - temporally, and usually spatially distinct. Glasses and cups, even on the most informal occasions, are washed between users.

Once, in a very easy-going household, late at night, a group of men and a few women were drinking home-brewed rum together. This was an extremely rare occasion in itself, as women are discouraged from drinking alcohol, and it is perceived as a very male pursuit. Thus the occasion was noted for its informality, its comradeship and its equality. One wife, however, made everyone worried and defensive by deliberately rinsing her glass before passing it to her husband. This immediately changed the tone of the proceedings, as she was reminding everyone of the appropriate behaviour at such times. She was emphasising the correctness of "place" as she saw it, and did not perceive any advantage in alternative modes.

Kutchi young people do not have high hopes of their marriage partners. They may appreciate the change in status, but personality is not seen as an integral part of the process. This may largely be due to the fact that the characters are not yet seen as individuals; without any power, property or decision-making capacity, the young are pawns in one of the most important adult games.

An advantage to be perceived in starting with little or no preconceived ideals or knowledge is that expectations are unlikely to be dashed, and that marriages will endure in spite of personalities, rather than because of them. Again, beginning with lower value judgements, perceptually the contract will be more inclined to ameliorate than

deteriorate.

However, within the society there exist perfect mechanisms to ensure that if a married couple do not like each other, they rarely have to have any contact, except for the production of an acceptable number of children, and for a very few essential shared tasks in the fields. This results in their being able to cohabit successfully within the confines of socially acceptable behaviour. In fact, in ideal understanding, a husband is not expected to enjoy the company of his wife. He should prefer his father, mother, sister and other kin. He should take their side in arguments. The marital tie should never threaten or surmount the kinship link, or else much grumbling, and even sorrow will ensue within his family. (See also LaFontaine 1981.)

Empirically, however, many men seem to prefer their wives, and it is possible to some extent to overcome these societal pressures towards marital segregation rather than conform to them - provided that the men take the initiatives. A man does not incur disapproval by doing so, unless he threatens the integrity of the male group in some way, or his own self-esteem. Women, on the other hand, are very much more constrained to conform to what they perceive as the ideals and values of the female group, and deviation is much less of a possibility.

The affinal/kinship contradiction however looms large in their social interactions. It can cause resentment, dispute, and rift. In the village, several men were more inclined to trust money to their sisters than their wives. In other cases, it was the wife who kept the family money and controlled its expenditure.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that even if a wife succeeds in winning over her husband as a friend and ally, she will never, as long and hard as she tries, win over his kin. At certain times, in a form of fission/fusion process, the household may support the wife in opposition to some threatening external group. However, this short-term alliance is just that. The wife will soon be criticised for the way she behaves, dresses and socialises the children, for the

amount she eats, and for the amount she serves her husband and his family.

A daughter-in-law replaces a daughter within the family, but can obviously never emotionally prove a substitute. Thus the contradictions and problems involved in "marrying out", are relevant to this society. A wife is by her very essence "bad", and a threat. Kutchi bias is constantly evident, although rarely admitted; one of the exceptions being the following example.

The women had been talking about the badness of a certain mother-in-law - external, upsetting a village daughter. I jokingly said were not all mothers-in-law bad, and one old woman after a long pause responded frankly:

Husband and father-in-law are usually all right. But mothers-in-law are always bad. It is on account of work. She is bound to get cross because of the work the son's wife is doing. Look at Netha with her daughter-in-law - she is foul.

Everyone laughed in agreement about their absent neighbour.

The reasons for disagreements are thus said to be on account of work. Observation would suggest that there are probably many reasons for conflict, and that although they may be said to be caused by work, this is unlikely. Daughters -in-law do as much work, and usually more than absent daughters. Rows between mothers and daughters over work were minimal.

There is instead a basic mistrust of the incoming wife; not only in terms of the very real political threat to the agnatic group, but also because of underlying jealousies between the two women, and the constant reminder to the older woman that later she might be totally dependant on her son and his wife. There is also the question of zach loyalty. Many women would only have good words to say about members of their own zach, even though the latter could be blatantly "bad" in societal terms.

There follows an illustration of the young wife's lower status, as compared to a zach daughter. The response was typical of the female group, although the men present seemed surprised about the vehement way in which it was uttered.

Some cloth had been brought from the local town, an exciting event. Many women had gathered to view it, and one of the richest had managed to acquire it for herself. The cloth would make more than one blouse, and so the man who had brought it was voicing suggestions as to whom else it should be given, one of which was to the woman's eldest son's wife. An old woman present exclaimed angrily, "For a wife, do not be stupid! Leave wives out of this. Mother to daughter is best".

6) MARITAL DIFFERENCES

Arguments within marriage are unlike most others in Kutchi society, in that grievances are not aired loudly for all the world to hear. Husband and wife are expected to keep any disagreement to themselves. Perhaps because of their ideology of the husband as head; perhaps because of their denial of the importance of the marital relationship - in as much as it involves actual personalities; perhaps because of the fear of admitting emotional proximity if any unusual attention were paid to it - all these things contribute to their unusual reticence and secrecy on such occasions. The marital bond is quietly accepted and ignored - de-emphasised in contrast to the kinship bond - and only stressed when under threat, as in separation, infidelity and death.

And yet such arguments do take place, perhaps silently, perhaps with much back-biting, perhaps letting a close member of the same sex know, perhaps sulking and avoiding each other as much as possible. Most probable causes are relationships with kin, money, property, the children, infidelity in thought or deed, or not performing adequately

their respective roles.

The outcome varies from case to case. Husbands ideally have the last word. On the other hand, many succumb to their wives' sulks and tantrums. The woman can make things rather embarrassing by publicising indirectly the household rift. She can do this by means of her control over food and drink. By providing meals for the husband and guests slowly and inappropriately, she can make him lose face, because he is theoretically the household head, and any faults even on the domestic side reflect on him.

It is reputedly common practice for a husband to beat his new wife at first, to make sure that she knows who is in command and what is expected of her. These beatings can theoretically be initiated because of perceptually fairly trivial, or fairly major disagreements or misbehaviour. Empirically, the only beatings that were observed, were in cases of sexual transgressions on the part of the woman - either hypothetical or actual.

Men say that a wife will never be a good one, and stay with her husband, unless she fears him. They say that it is the affines' responsibility to control a new wife, and the latter's to obey. Women tend to agree with these viewpoints. They approve of the beating of the young wife, especially as they all know that it will be prevented before it goes on too long. Being a very public society, in terms of sight and sound, neighbours can discern almost immediately when a beating is taking place. As a response, women then dispatch a young man to restrain the husband. The time they take to do this, is dependent upon whether they perceive the wife to be deserving or not, but it is always after only a few blows. The women will then enter, and by way of set format, remonstrate with the husband for beating his wife, and list the wife's misdemeanours loudly, exhorting her not to continue with them.

Older women boast of the times that they were beaten when they were first married. how violent and aggressive their husbands were with

them and how they needed to be taught. For example, Zakal, a middle-aged married woman with ten children, would reminisce with eyes alight with pleasure about the time when she was first married and her husband would beat her for some minor misdemeanour! I would regard her carefully, stunned not so much by what I was hearing, but to the way in which it was being referred. She was actually boasting about the amount of pain she had had to suffer at his hands; how her health had never been the same since - she coughed blood and had bad arthritis. (In fact these ailments were probably not attributable to his former violence, but it is important that she perceived them to be so.)

When I asked her why he used to beat her, she smiled shyly, like an adolescent in love, saying - "You know how it is. When you first get married, there are a lot of things that you have to learn to do differently. He had to teach me." She seemed not the least bit resentful about their early years, taking pride in the fact that he cared enough about her to want to "improve" her. This pride may seem misguided in our terms, but it is very real pride nonetheless. Zakal would boast of the fact that he had actually beaten her in front of her own mother, (obviously a very strong husband indeed.) After many years of marriage, her adoration of her husband was visible and intense, and she would prefer his company to that of anyone else.

Young wives emerge from their houses the day following a beating, sore and a bit shaken, but nevertheless proud of what their husbands have done - bragging that they caused great hurt and that it was a large punishment rather than a small one.

Wives will ask other wives, with whom they have had little contact before, whether their husbands beat them, and it is a matter of pride if they do. Women with less violent, more humble husbands, are ambivalent about this. They seem glad to have been spared the pain, but are obviously rather ashamed and embarrassed because of their non-beating spouses. Wife-beating is not however a daily occurrence within the village - I observed three occasions in twenty months.

Separation and divorce happen very infrequently. It is in the interests of both families to keep a marriage intact, having invested in it in financial, temporal and emotional terms. Divorce and separation are not given serious enough consideration in their value-system to become options. If the first wife is barren, the husband may be encouraged to take another wife, if he can afford one, but he has to retain the first. The notion of unattached women floating around, is incomprehensible to the Kutchi. Once a bond is made, it is made for all time. Thus, even broken engagements are rare, and elicit severe disapproval. One man, who had his engagement to a village girl broken off, because of her reputed misdemeanours, was still referred to as her husband - despite the fact that she had since been married twice, and that he was also married to someone else.

On the other hand, they do know about official divorces, Governmentally instituted, where a man's family can be pressed to sign a document (if they are unhappy with the marriage), whereby the woman's family are free to marry her again without threat of repercussions. The villagers used to speak with awe about one family they had heard of who possessed such a document. This was the only case I heard of however.

The main, though rare, form of breakdown occurs during the engagement or early part of the marriage. This may in fact be due to either side, and I know of instances of both. There may be rumours of immoral behaviour before the marriage, and so the groom's side are at liberty to call a halt to proceedings - before taking the irreparable step of procuring an impure wife. A certain amount of flirtatious behaviour on the groom's part is accepted and even condoned. It would not in any way affect his marriage prospects, unless perhaps the liaison resulted in pregnancy.

Any threatened termination of the marriage contract results in lengthy talks, negotiations and arguments, amongst all those involved in its arrangement. Sometimes the outcome is the continuation of the contract; sometimes one party's reluctant and grudging withdrawal. A

similar situation may occur in the early days of the marriage, and result in comparable though more serious and extended discussions. Perhaps the groom actively dislikes his bride. Perhaps the girl is rude and lazy, and it is his family's wish to return her home. Again I must stress that all these occur very rarely, as so much prior investigation goes into her and the family situation.

The girl herself may be more than usually unhappy with her new home and affines, and if her parents prove sympathetic, they may permit her to stay with them. This is also exceedingly rare, as they will have invested a great deal in the marriage, will want to avoid total responsibility for her chastity again, and even if this marriage contract is successfully annulled it may prove difficult to obtain a desirable husband for a girl liable to complain.

There is much less likelihood of the dissolution of a marriage if years have elapsed, and children have been born. Although they say that if a wife is unfaithful, she will be badly beaten by her husband and sent back to her own people; in reality the latter measure does not seem to take place, especially if children are involved. I have known of a few wives beaten for infidelity, including one woman of a childless marriage. Things tend to return to normal after a while, with perhaps more watch being placed on the erring wife. Before many years, it will become a humorous tale for the rest of the village. Tempted or unfaithful husbands, will also usually opt to remain with wife and children.

7) ASSIMILATION AND MARITAL COMPATIBILITY.

As the years progress, the young wife begins to acquire more status and prestige within the village community. There are several reasons for this. 1) The longer she remains in the village, the larger the possibility that she will be accepted by other members, especially her peers - although probably never by her husband's older kin. 2) If she has children, she will both become more accepted by the other

villagers, and she also will become much more committed to the village through her children. The latter belong there. 3) The older she becomes, the more likelihood of the arrival of younger wives, beneath her on the status ladder, and through whom she can emphasise at their expense her own power and position.

Thus a wife can generally expect her relative status to improve progressively. The factors upon which this is dependent, are her own fertility, and the relative age of her husband in terms of his brothers. It is practice for the eldest son and his wife to leave the parental home when the next brother weds. He builds a house nearby for his wife and children, to ensure sufficient space for the growing family. The grandparents and their children are still however maintained by a younger couple, living in the house and working for them.

With household separation, there arrives an increasing lack of tension for the wife, as her dependence upon the goodwill of her husband's family declines. She is mistress of her own home, mother of the children, and such roles bring their own quiet importance and prestige, which are expressed now in alternative terms.

Her relative freedom and ability to form her own contacts and relationships, are much greater when she moves outwith the scope and power of the mother-in-law. Wives who have maintained their own domestic affairs for many years, and have developed compatibility with the husband, tend to feel threatened if the father-in-law dies and the widowed mother comes to live within the household. At this stage, the roles are often greatly reversed, and it is the mother-in-law who has to tread carefully.

In those households where from the beginning, there has never been a mother-in-law, the wives there seem to all intents and purposes to be the most dominant members. The husbands treat them with respect and fear and the wives usually retain the last word. The cases are commonly acknowledged amongst the other villagers, some amused, some fearful at such a state of affairs.

As Sharma (1980:11) and others have noted, the marital relationship itself is a difficult area of study, involving a complex value-system, and rather more than in other social areas, subjective perceptions on the part of both anthropologist and participants. I responded to this by means of case-studies of those couples I knew very well, illustrating their responses in certain contexts, and emphasising their attitudes and values, as they became apparent in the intensive contact of the fieldwork situation. Suffice it to say here, that despite popular ideology about marriage, a whole spectrum of actual practice was recorded amongst the Kutchi;- from western idealised forms of sharing and companionship, through male unrivalled authority and domination, to female domestic domination - where the husband had devolved all power and decision- making in practice, and maintained only the few necessary outward societal symbols of female gender subordination.

8) WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS

If a wife dies, a relatively young man has to try and find another one to look after any children, and to provide domestic services for them all. If he is rich, he can give money for another wife, making an arrangement with her father. This will generally be with a girl who has also been married before. For a girl's first marriage, the Kutchi say that they do not think it right to be a monetary transaction. Ideally, the marriage arrangement should be made at an early stage, involving the full rituals as described at the beginning of the chapter. Their rules state that a woman can only undertake these rites once in a lifetime. No such rules apply for men, who can "circle the fire" many times more, and thus are theoretically able to go through a second official wedding ceremony with a young never-married girl.

Families stress, however, that they prefer marriages to be the first time for both. Their predominant wish is for their daughters to be happily married. They do however admit that "bad" fathers will sell daughters for money, or marry them to old men on the latter's second time round.

A woman who is widowed, must give back her marriage jewelry to her affines. The Kutchi state that it belongs to them, and that it is a form of theft if it is not returned. They also say that the dead man's ziv (soul) cannot find proper rest until his zach have been given back everything owing. This generally also includes any children from the marriage.

The woman thus loses bracelets, necklace and anklets. She feels naked and ashamed, and all women feel great pity for a woman with no jewelry. The biggest loss she feels is that of the bracelets, which chiefly serve to distinguish married women from girls and widows. She feels embarrassed in public, rubbing her bare arms self-consciously. All women experience this associated stigma, whether old or young - being an essential marking characteristic of full womanhood.

If a woman is widowed young, is presentable and is able to bear children, she may be taken by her husband's younger brother. This however only apparently occurs if both parties are in agreement, and is reputed to happen less frequently in present times.

If many children are involved, the most respected course of action is to remain in the affinal village, being dependent there, having a low status and all the menial, unpopular household chores to perform. This way of life is respected because it demonstrates humility, and means that one can stay with one's children. It is a hard life, however, and many women prefer to return to their natal families. If breast-feeding at the time, that child is permitted to accompany them, and often the affines are prepared to release custody of female offspring.

Depending upon the possibilities, the woman's kin usually want to marry her off. She would generally prefer this herself. This cannot entail a second marriage rite, as stated above, but is referred to as, "making a home with someone", - essentially the same process as when a couple run away together. A woman in this type of union, will often attempt to conceal her past, for fear of being sneered at by other

women, and not respected as a result of not having "circled the fire," with the husband.

Sometimes the arrangement will be for money, as mentioned above. On other occasions, different forms of transactions may take place, as in the case of the young widow mentioned earlier in the chapter whose father lacked male agricultural help, and so procured the labour of a son-in-law by giving his daughter "free".

In the village however, there also lived a woman in a reluctant state of widowhood because her father, the patel, and his second wife, preferred to have her labour in the household. This created disapproval amongst the other women, who watched her growing steadily older, and "wasting" all those child-bearing years.

Older women who are widowed, usually live with a son or daughter. Their position within the household is generally low, but is dependent upon their deceased husbands' status within the community. Unmarriageable widows - past menopause - wear skirts of an inferior fabric and of a different colour, black or white. They wear similar coloured veils, and blouses of a single colour - often the striped fabric they would formerly, as married women, have used for skirts. Their clothing is thus again a marking feature, illustrating role reversal - amongst women - and impurity.

As a widow, a woman avoids her deceased husband's elder male kin as before. She will still be referred to as his wife. If she "marries" again, she no longer needs to avoid the first group, having a different group to avoid instead. However, it is considered preferable and polite to continue to do so, as they are the first and real affines; but they retain no claim on further children.

CONCLUSION.

In this part, I have considered the role of a woman in the affinal home. Temporally, it has spanned the wedding ceremony, associated transitional traumas and first reactions to an alien village, to increasing assimilation and changing allegiances and value-judgements. Examples of cases throughout have illustrated the nature of the marital bond amongst the Kutchi, exceptions and validations. It has been noted that, as Ardener (1978) says for "muted groups," most of societal policing is performed by the women themselves. This is similarly true of the male group to a limited extent, where their actions are assessed by the women as being appropriate or otherwise, and they are then subject to social controls often administered by the women themselves.

Although women see their lives as a progression through the life-cycle, (and perhaps regression when it comes to widowhood), in terms of status and power vis-a-vis other women, this has evolved from a world-view which only indirectly heeds the position of men, who relatively infrequently enter the female scheme of things. Their values are set apart and distinct. Similarly, the possession of power "on the ground", does not affect their basic female world-view in all other areas of life. An essence of shared femaleness is forever part of the collective consciousness, as is the belief in the superiority of their own ethnic group.

PART FOUR: WOMEN AS MOTHERS

Introduction.

- 1) Conception.
 - a) Menstruation.
 - b) Embryo's Development.
 - 2) Birth.
 - a) Practices.
 - b) Afterwards.
 - c) Purity Customs.
 - d) Customs for the Newborn.
 - e) Naming.
 - 3) Infertility.
 - 4) Birth Control.
- Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, I will explore Kutchi women's beliefs concerning conception, birth and infertility. This will naturally encompass ideas about menstruation, associated impurity and cleansing practices. It becomes obvious that women as a group maintain a distinct ideology, which is appropriate to their perceptions and practices, and as such in accordance with an unchallenged world-view.

I will in addition describe briefly the boys' naming ceremony, which is again exclusively within the province of the female group.

1) CONCEPTION.

Motherhood amongst the Kutchi is the most important role for a woman. Many of their ideas and practices revolve around it.

Once the new bride is settled in the affinal village and once the husband has sufficiently overcome his nerves and embarrassment, he will begin to have sexual intercourse with his wife. The main aim in popular ideology is to procreate children. Depending on the individuals, this stage can take a short or a long time. Some couples sleep together within the first two months of marriage. Other men have been heard to admit that they have not had sexual intercourse a year after the marriage, owing to impeding circumstances.

Generally, the expectation is to have produced a baby within the first two years. Several young wives told me that they did not give birth until after this, which had been socially accepted. However, they were speaking from the privileged position of having produced a baby eventually. As childless years progress, the situation does become much more difficult.

Many first babies are still-births or die within the initial few weeks. A higher number of first babies seem to die this way, presumably because of the young age of the mother and the usual loss in such societies of the weakest due to malnutrition or disease. Everyone grieves when this occurs, but losing a child is socially more acceptable than being barren and is continually emphasised. "There were others, but Ishvar (Supreme Deity) took them away."

One old woman, who had many theories on life and biology, reckoned that she could give an account of conception based upon observation and experience. She was a midwife and considered an expert in such matters.

You get married. You wash your menstrual cloths for four months, then have a baby in your stomach for nine, then wash cloths for twelve months, then conceive again.

Most women who have had children, reckon that pregnancy lasts nine months, and that if these have passed - "one does not have to wait much longer". I did, however, hear them admitting the possibility of, "dropping it early", and they say that older women often carry babies for ten months and produce very big babies by the end. Some young women express little knowledge and say that they are dependent upon older women telling them when their time is nearly finished. With sudden flashes of inspiration, others changed their, "don't knows", to , "They say with women it takes nine months. With goats it takes five." Many pregnant women do not know or care when their baby is actually due. On the other hand, it is always a major topic of conversation amongst women - calculating when so-and-so's baby is due; who gives birth before whom; and the co-ordination of similar news from women in other villages.

The women recognise a definite connection between menstruation and conception. Time is calculated according to the moon. They know at which stage of the moon's cycle their last menstrual period occurred, and then count nine months from the last washing of their cloths, if they are interested in discovering their approximate delivery date.

They liken conception to the fertilisation of a field. The woman provides the environment for growth and nourishment. The man provides the seed. At this stage, there is little divergence between male and female viewpoints. Differences do however occur in the aspect of resemblance and in the realm of fertility - these will be examined shortly.

I will quote two men on the subject of conception, upon which there is little divergence between the sexes. In popular ideology, conception is not perceived to occur as the result of one specific sex act. Theoretically, it can be happening at any stage, providing the man and woman are having intercourse and the gods have given their consent. (On the other hand, there are unexplored contradictions to this in practice - for example the single act fertilisation of a buffalo,

rape and premarital intercourse.)

Buro - "It is from the woman that the child is formed. But first she must take the zivan (life-force/power) of the man."

Shavo - "This lies behind his forehead, (nasal mucus being thought of as the same substance as semen), and from there it travels down and into the woman. That is why his son looks like him and his daughter looks like her mother."

Buro - "Yet you must have life from both to form a child. The man's zivan mixes with the blood of the woman and a ball forms with Ishvar's will, from which the child grows. But it grows from the blood of the woman, that is why women are weak compared to men. It is from their blood, their flesh, and their skin that the child is formed."

a) MENSTRUATION

It is thought by women that blood not used in the formation of the child is lost through menstruation.

Washing her menstrual cloths is practically the only activity that a Kutchi woman does alone. Anything undertaken outside the village, including defecation, necessitates the presence of other women - the group providing safety and security against outsiders.

Menstruation is not a matter upon which they converse freely, even amongst the female group, where on almost every other subject conversation is public. The women say that they know when a girl has her first menses, as from then they have to protect and observe her closely. However, they atypically appear to have little knowledge or interest as to when other women are menstruating. "Let it come when it wants. It does not matter and no-one really knows."

Menstruation is seen as being impure and rather a nuisance. It has a lesser impurity than that associated with childbirth, but dirty cloths and spoiled skirts are treated with a mild revulsion.

Their word for menstruation is lugara, which means clothes, cloths, and is used in other contexts to denote items of dress made of cloth.

Thus, a word used widely in everyday conversation means also a very specific private thing in women's language. In sign-language, menstruation is referred to by pinching a bit of the skirt they are wearing at approximately thigh level. The cloths used are mainly from their old skirts - gargara. These skirts comprise ten to fifteen metres of fabric, resulting in their concealing a multitude of functions and immodesties. A skirt is never removed, without firstly being replaced by another, (except when giving birth or bathing). Old skirts are kept in order to be torn into cloths and those less faded and torn are sometimes made into female quilts.

Gargara, being brightly coloured, with a predominance of red, can conceal any mishaps. The redness of female clothing is emphasised in comparison with the white of maleness. (See also Wadley (ed.) 1980.) Kutchi women usually wear old skirts whilst menstruating, although they say that blouses and headcloths do not matter. As to duration, it is said:

Sometimes it stays one day. Sometimes, two, three or even four. Four days is a shame and a nuisance. But then one washes and everything is all right again.

Women do perceive menstruation as a nuisance and a mess. Examples were given about unfortunate travelling incidents.

That is the thing about lugara, you sometimes get yourself all soaked and soiled. Still, Ishvar sends and Ishvar takes it away.

In fact, amongst the women, it was always the dirt and nuisance factors that were emphasised rather than the intrinsic impurity of the female state, which I found to be a male view. The women did not reflect upon their own femaleness in this derogatory light and regarded any impurity as a temporary problem.

Several times I was asked if there were pills available to stop menstruation, purely for convenience. However, it also seemed to be believed that the "body would go bad" without it and they referred to women who had reached menopause as "poor things".

When women get old, it becomes like that. Poor things. It gets closed. Mali's mother is like that, and so is my mother-in-law, and my mother was like that, who died

recently, poor thing. I don't know why it closes. It just happens. God gives, and he gives children, but he also takes away. They don't wear the same clothes as before, poor things.

I observed that whilst women often grumble about the nuisance of lugara, (and there is certainly a great deal of effort involved in keeping cloths, wide skirts and quilts clean), they nevertheless always express regret for women who have reached menopause. They feel sorry for them; with menstruation departs an essential feature of femaleness, a defining principle, which is used in opposition to maleness. A woman's whole prestige and importance depend upon bearing children - this is her own self-evaluation and that of the other women in the group - menstruation is seen as integral to this. The older woman recognises that her fecundity has ceased and others recognise this of her. There is thus an ambivalence about menstruation in their world-view.

During menstruation women say that they sleep upon beds, unless they are prone to very heavy periods - in which case they sleep on the floor for the worst part. Generally however, they say that they simply gather their skirts tightly around them to prevent soiling the quilts.

I asked whether they cooked food at these times. They seemed surprised that I should ask this and said, "Of course". Elaborating, they said:

We have to make it if there is no-one else - how else are men, the children, and guests to be fed? If there is another woman in the house to cook, then they do. But, if not, you just have to go ahead and make it when you are menstruating. Otherwise are our men to go to other houses to be fed?

Outraged pride was in evidence at the end of this statement. Here, as in many other examples, it seems that household necessity, economic and social, plus female ideals, outweigh purity beliefs. Some of the women were slightly worried by the above question, feeling embarrassed in case an outsider might ascribe to them a lowly and impure status because of their answers; basing assessment upon relative external

symbols rather than reality. They felt and knew the correctness of their own position and wished to be judged accordingly.

Women say that there is no difference in the types of food they eat when menstruating. They wash their cloths in the canal irrigation channels when alone. No special stretch of the water is used for these purposes - nor for washing after defecation. After their last use per monthly cycle, the cloths are thrown away into the zungl, jungle, wild, uncultivated land. It is the time spent outside, waiting for their cloths to dry on the bushes in the sun, that they see as dangerous. They cannot leave the cloths, as they would with other items of clothing, because of the associated restrictions and entailed privacy. Here occurs a divergence of belief between women and men, as to whom the, as yet, unconceived child will resemble. (See also Nichter 1977 for somewhat similar beliefs.)

When the woman is out washing her menstrual cloths for the last time before her blood forms a child, if she sees someone, the child will resemble him or her. If you see someone light-skinned while they are drying, (which is the time to beware), then it will be light-skinned. If, however, you see someone dark-skinned, then the baby will be black, unfortunately. That is what happened to Zomi here. The baby will take on the colouring and features of the person you have seen. Not noses because we shape them ourselves. It is only to do with resemblance - not the sex of the child. It is Ishvar who determines that, by sending sons.

Look at these girls in one family. That is why they all look different. The child may look like the father if you see him, that is good. But how can you see yourself?

My daughters don't look like me, do they?

If you happen to reveal your thigh while you are washing your cloths and bathing, you will have an African-type baby - black, so black, with fuzzy hair. The wife of a bhagat once told me this, and so it is definitely true.

The latter statement provided new and startling information for many present and the extremely old lady who divulged it was smug about her revelation.

Married Kutchi all shave their pubic hair and think not doing so is highly dirty. They also believe that it will grow without ceasing if it is

not cut - similar to head hair. They are prejudiced about skin colour, making distinctions and value- judgements between their own children in terms of light and dark skin. To have dark skin is used as an insult and to refer to "lower" tribal groups. Sights gained of "Makrami" - ex-slaves of African origin, who have settled in the coastal area west of Karachi, enable the Kutchi to speak of them as being the blackest, most inferior people in their conceivable world-view. They frequently refer to them derogatorily with a sense of self- righteousness. The Makrami are thought to be on a level with animals and an incredible abomination to the Kutchi would be to have such a child. Hence the impact of the old woman's warning, which encompassed their racial prejudice and beliefs about looking at one's own pubic area - incorrectly unshaven in this case.

I will discuss their attitudes towards sexual intercourse in chapter four.

b) EMBRYO'S DEVELOPMENT.

The younger a woman is and the fewer children she already has, the prouder she will be to be pregnant. Generally, however, all women are pleased to be so, as fertility is greatly respected and envied.

Women say that they do not have to avoid any foods while pregnant, only after the birth and when they are breast-feeding. I have however seen them refusing "bitter" foods, such as oranges - said to upset a pregnant stomach. They say that they can often predict the sex of the baby that they are bearing, because girls make one sick in pregnancy and boys have no such effects. Dreams are also believed to foretell in some cases the sex of the embryo and whether more than one child will be born. The Kutchi say that they do not know why twins are born. They have no interpretation for this, except that Ishvar sends them sometimes. Twins are seen as being a sign of good fortune. Just as one child is appreciated, two are regarded as being that much more bountiful. Sometimes they are viewed as a

reward for good deeds done or to replace a dead child of the family.

Women do not have definite, structured answers as to why boy or girl children are born. Many look confused and surprised and say that it always depends upon Ishvar which is given. Some say that it does not matter what is eaten. Others say that it is a question of strength whether a boy or a girl is conceived; one must be strong for a boy; for girls, it is less important. They then admit that one can become strong by eating strength-giving foods. milk, ghi, goat.

Goat is stronger than ghi. Men eat these things. Women can eat them as well if they want, but in the end it is up to Ishvar.

The above statement was made by a woman. Ideally, women may be able to eat these things, but actually it does not happen, except perhaps in the richest households, where there may be a choice. Even here, women often refuse. They perceive meat and milk essentially to be male items. In talking about strength, there is no implied sexual competition between husband and wife in terms of embryo sex formation, as stated in some of the Indian ethnography. (For example Jha 1979.)

In the last resort, most women say that the answer lies in the man's head, or semen-store. On the other hand, one old woman had a theory on the birth of sons, and said that if the wife was a good woman and observed four things, she would be able to have a boy. If she did not, it would be difficult to have a son. She only remembered three of these things - do not speak evil of anyone, be good, do not hurt anyone. The fourth rule she said was to "be good" again, whereupon she became very confused trying to remember them all properly. No-one else ever stated this belief, but she was the oldest woman in the village with much traditional wisdom, and so it was probably a former belief, if forgotten now.

During pregnancy a woman will maintain much the same level of work and, if there are no other younger women in the household, will do heavy work until she begins labour. I have seen cases where the woman

has been working all day in the fields and gives birth that night. However, in every family that can manage to excuse her economically, this is the preference.

When she is near her time, she is prevented from going far, and if she is outside the village when it begins, she is carried home.

The woman refers to herself as being bar, or sometimes baran, the latter term meaning "heavy", as of a burden or weight. They also refer to the pregnant state as, "there is something in the stomach". When pregnant, women generally wander less far from home and try to conceal themselves a little more. They visit the other houses in the hamlet, but pull their veils to the front and over the stomach when talking or carrying waterpots. This prevents the lower stomach being shown as it protrudes over the hipband of the skirt. Otherwise, the blouse being backless and not long enough for pregnancy, tends to conceal little. This method thus conforms to their new standards of modesty.

They do not perceive the stomach as comprising different parts and therefore everything is seen to be floating inside one large container. When asked how an embryo grew, they responded initially that Ishvar made it, but soon elaborated on this by saying that it both ate and drank.

Through their mouths, just a little. Whatever the mother eats and drinks - the baby takes a little of what it needs. The eyes are not open, otherwise it might go in there.

Everything we eat, they eat some of it - bread, buttermilk, green peppers, tea and curry. That is how they become big. If we did not eat, they would die.

Both women were rather embarrassed and wary about such questions, and therefore I asked what I think had been troubling them. (They had both been asked when alone and on separate occasions.) - "And do they defecate?" Their hurried and shocked responses told me that they had indeed been thinking along such lines. Faeces are so impure and abhorrent to the Kutchi that they were bound to have been troubled by such a suggestion and they nearly shouted,

Of course they do not defecate. Not until after the birth

has taken place.

2) BIRTH.

a) PRACTICES:

Certain older, experienced village women - usually grandmothers - are recognised as being capable of midwifery. If, however, a family is particularly wealthy and prestigious, they may make arrangements for a midwife with an even better reputation to come from another village. External midwives are given money for a successful delivery, especially if the baby is a boy. Midwives from within the village are not given money, but are gifted a new set of clothes. Their role is one which embarrasses and is associated with impurity. Thus, they are reluctant to talk about it, or even to admit that they do help at births. Other women say that they do however.

In the nearest town, there is a "nurse", married to a "doctor". She runs a clinic for women, and as a third generation Christian, of Punjabi origin, she is happy to treat Hindu Scheduled Caste women. (This is in contrast to other hospitals throughout Sind, where open discrimination is practised). Women who have trouble conceiving are taken here, with happy results in some cases. I have also talked to two women who have actually given birth there; one because her husband is educated and she was found to be carrying twins; the second because she and her husband had had a great deal of contact with western attitudes and ideas.

Both, although saying that it is good to have babies in hospital -in case anything goes wrong and also being thus able to ignore Kutchi birth taboos and practices - still gave birth to their next babies in the village. There existed a very ambivalent attitude in this respect. On the one hand, they felt privileged and proud to have undergone a hospital labour - giving prestige in the village with many new experiences to recount. On the other hand, they said that they preferred having village labours, surrounded by family and the familiar.

This was despite the recognition by practically all the women that drugs are available in town.

Birth takes place inside the family mud house. If there is only one house, then in there. If, however, there is a less prestigious house belonging to the extended family -for example yau (son's wife's) house - this will be used. This is satisfactory for the older woman in several ways, being practicable for the rest of the family and also keeping the main house free from impurity.

Other household women, or those neighbouring are immediately alerted at the onset of labour. One will depart quietly to inform a village midwife. Then, perhaps the husband will go to another village and fetch a better one. The whole event takes place as silently as possible. Usually two or three women help the mother in labour, but this depends upon who is available at the time and the need. One woman I know, delivered the baby herself in a very short time, before her elder brother's wife arrived to help. On the other hand, I have heard of a difficult case, where all the women in the area were called in to offer advice and assistance. For daytime deliveries, children may be present.

The woman lies on an old quilt on the floor. Her skirt is removed, and replaced by an old veil tied around the waist, or an old quilt is wrapped around her. The blood impurity of childbirth is thought impossible to remove totally from cloth, even with much washing.

During labour, she lies or sits. Her stomach is pressed occasionally by the midwife. It is a matter of pride not to yell out or make any noise. "Yes it hurts, but we do not say anything." Due to their belief that the stomach is one large container and not compartmentalised, they believe that the baby could emerge via the anal passage:

You know, where one defecates from. But that would be bad. The woman would die. She would never be able to defecate properly again. That is why we fold up a piece of quilt to form a pad, and the midwife holds this with her foot rammed right against the anus, so that the baby comes out the front bit. The good proper way.

They do not have anything to drink whilst in labour, believing this to be inconceivable. Ghi or sweet oil is used as a lubricant for easier delivery.

They say that babies born in the summer are smaller and weaker because of the heat and the amount of work the mother has to do at this time of year. Certainly babies of the summer months have a much higher mortality rate.

It was said:

It is easy to give birth to a small baby - it just falls out. You can do it yourself. The pain comes when the baby is large.

They talk of the pain of childbirth being agonising, the worst pain imaginable. However, they say that it is a pain soon forgotten if the baby survives.

The cord is cut at approximately three and a half inches from the baby. The women in the host village used razor blades for this, and said that otherwise, "It goes bad on the baby." In another village that I visited directly after a birth, a knife had been used. They were defensive and self-righteous about this and said that they always did so. Nowhere did I hear of a grass scythe being used. This is their most traditional metal instrument and apparently some Hindu in Sind still use it to cut the cord. Nor do they sprinkle water to ward off evil spirits, as reported from other Scheduled Castes.

The women did not seem to know or care what the afterbirth or cord were for. These were simply regarded as being highly dirty and polluting. It was suggested tentatively that they were - "perhaps to stop the baby falling out when it is small?" When speaking about the afterbirth, they showed a real sense of repugnance. It was obviously considered the main source of birth impurity and to it was attributed the pain of childbirth.

The pain is small, and gets worse. The baby is born. The pain is great. The stomach is pushed by the "midwife", and the afterbirth falls out. After that the pain gets less.

The afterbirth is buried under the mud floor, at a reasonable depth. The hole is then refilled by mud and packed down.

The midwife, or helper, usually buries the afterbirth because the mother is flat on her back. Poor thing (the midwife), we give her clothes because of it - skirt, blouse and veil. She has a bath and washes her clothes straight after the work is finished. The mother ji-pai (plasters) the area herself later.

The afterbirth is buried between the mother and the hearth. (See also Howell 1984 - culturalising nature by cooking, a cultural mode.) Although I tried to ascertain some connection between birth and the direction the mother was facing, there did not seem to be a common factor, even taking into consideration the sex of the baby. In general, the woman was positioned in a corner near the hearth, often with her back against the door wall. This perhaps procured more privacy but additional draughts. Once positioned, the woman cannot move from this site on the floor until the proscribed period of time has elapsed.

One woman I knew very well was ill after the birth of her seventh child - fourth son - and was suffering from bad fevers. It was mid-winter and her husband, a rich and influential man, went into town to fetch the afore-mentioned doctor. The latter said that she must be moved out of that draughty position, but although the women pretended that they would do so at the time, they later refused. The husband, who usually insisted on anything concerning the welfare of his beloved family, knew in this case not to interfere.

Reasons given for burying the afterbirth are as follows:

We bury it deep in the house, because otherwise the dogs smell it, go crazy for it, and dig it out straight away. But they cannot get at it under all that mud, with nice ji-pai on the top.

Dogs certainly go after the afterbirth of animals. Being perpetually half-starved and fortunate if they acquire tiny pieces of stale chapatti, they go wild at the prospect of any meat or blood. They are not permitted anywhere near the houses and living areas, and are banished violently. Once an animal has given birth, children or old women have to attempt to pick up the afterbirth with a stick and

fling it as far as possible over the dung heaps at the back of the house - preferably on to the thorn hedge. Obvious distaste and repugnance accompanies this gesture, with everyone trying to prevent the offending object from touching clothes or shoes. Scrupulous washing of hands follows. The whole topic is embarrassing for Kutchi women. Mothers squirm trying to avoid the following type of question from young sons, "What is that trailing from the baby goat's stomach?"

A major concern of the women was that the dogs might therefore bring back the human afterbirth and be seen eating it. They contrast their own life-style with that of town dwellers in India, where reputedly anything impure can simply be discarded outside to be cleared up by sweepers. The women always express a loathsome contempt for sweepers, and say that they "revel" in dirt and filth.

b) AFTERWARDS:

Soon after the birth, the mother has many female visitors from within the village. Men are ideally not permitted to see either mother or child until the former's ritual bath, because of the impurity and pollution involved. In practice, age and number of existing children tend to adapt these rules. For example, the husband in the above case, spent the first day after the birth of his son in a delighted drunken state with his hardened drinking friends from miles around. Later, after they had gone, he went in to see his wife. No-one felt that they could say anything to him, as he was so drunk; so rich and influential; a Christian and did not adhere to many Hindu customs. The old women sighed and knew that they had to admit defeat in this case. They were not surprised when her fevers started however, especially as he continued to go and see her whenever the mood took him after the initial visit.

In another case, one of our neighbours - a middle-aged man with a married son and daughter - studiously waited until all the household had left for the fields, his attention supposedly fixed upon the halter

of his ox. When no-one was in sight, he astonishingly sprinted across the village clearing in atypical and undignified manner to the house where his wife had just given birth. A few minutes later he emerged nonchalantly and looking satisfied.

On the other hand, one young man who was very attached to his wife went in to see her soon after labour, because their first son had been a stillbirth. He returned to the village with sore, red eyes; he said from the wind, the journey and crying. The women believed instead however, that it was because he had seen his wife too early and violated their purity rules. (The purity rules of females, which had been transgressed by a male. Compare Douglas 1966, matter out of place.)

In cases like the above, where the baby dies or is born dead, they say that the midwife firstly makes sure that it is and then removes it. "What more can be done, than throw it outside?" The women always refer to it with similar careless abandon, but in actual fact, as with babies who die before they are named, a hole is dug outside the village - not in the graveyard - the body is wrapped in a new cloth, and a family male buries it.

A surviving baby is washed briefly soon after birth in a large clay basin, formerly used for kneading flour. It is then wrapped tightly in an old veil, which is tied like a bundle around the stomach and arms. The baby's body is prevented from moving and this is the traditional method of care for the first few weeks. A baby girl lies on the floor beside her mother. For a boy, a tiny bed is procured - there were three within the village, which were shared by the households according to need. These are tiny versions of the adult charpoi (beds).

From the start, the baby boy is treated with more respect and deference. The women refer to him crooningly as the lado (bridegroom) and everyone anticipates excitedly his forthcoming naming ceremony. Generally better care is given to women who have mothered sons. Their whims are indulged and they are permitted longer absence from work.

Mothers of daughters are relatively disregarded and expected quickly to be active.

One young husband, whose wife's first baby was a girl, said that he could not be called a father yet. He refused to have any contact with the baby for a long time. Her mother-in-law was also displeased for the first few days and expressed nothing but contempt for the new arrival. Later however, all decided that she was a wonderful baby and she became the household treasure. This in fact happens frequently - girls are equally accepted after time has elapsed, but initially their status position has to be emphasised.

c) PURITY CUSTOMS:

If no men are in the vicinity, the mother may with discretion urinate behind the house. Excepting this, she must remain in the house until the second day after the birth when she must take her ritual purifying bath. Before this, she must remain on the quilt on the floor. After the purifying bath and having donated money as an offering to the patrilineage god, she may return to a bed. Birth involves blood impurity and therefore no ritual can be performed in a hamlet where a woman has given birth until five weeks have passed. The woman and her husband are not permitted sex for these five weeks, after which it is said to be a matter for the individuals themselves.

It has to be the full time, not just fifteen days. Before that it is not right or clean.

For the first two days, the woman does not attempt to breast-feed the baby. The women consider the milk directly after birth to be "bad" or polluted. (The same applies to animals, where the first milk is not taken by the household. Occasionally it is made into a sweet dish for the children or non-Kutchi, but adult Kutchi refuse it.) The baby is instead fed a little goat's milk, by means of a rag or piece of cotton.

The mother has to eat and drink special items at this time. Initially, she is only permitted to eat shiro (a dish made on some festive occasions, considered pure, and containing clarified butter, sugar and flour). She must eat foods containing much clarified butter, in order to purify the stomach. The customary bread/vegetable curry diet is forbidden her. It is said to be bad for the baby.

Before birth you can eat anything you want, but afterwards it can be dangerous.

Some women complain about these dietary restrictions, saying with good cause, that too much ghi makes them feel sick. However, they all abide by these requirements, certainly initially. As time progresses, practicalities again outweigh ideal stipulations however, and the mother reverts to her normal intake. This is accepted by the female group, providing mother and child are both thriving. If not, many will be quick to criticise the mother or her helpers' carelessness.

In addition to the above, milk and buttermilk theoretically must not be drunk at first. This includes milk in tea, in which all Kutchi like as much as possible. They are stricter about this milk prohibition than those involving food and for a longer period of time. Women who had given birth in town said that it no longer mattered, that their old ideas had obviously been mistaken as in the clinic they had been given plenty of milk for strength. However, when it came to the actual point after a village delivery, these women again only drank black tea. Justifications for this were manifold, and some are illustrated below:

Milk makes the woman smell. If you drink any milk, buttermilk, or anything like this for the first month, it makes your own milk go bad in the breast. After that it is all right.

We do not drink while in labour. Why would we drink then? How could we? We do not feed the baby for two days after either. Not till we wash ourselves. Nor do we drink milk for the first two or three days. Otherwise, they say that it remains in the stomach, and chundae sae - curdles, "becomes hot and light as the sun". If we drink black, the blood comes out quickly, and everything heals up, and other children can be conceived. If you drink milk, you become ill inside. I had so much blood for days after the delivery. Horrible. So did Mali. Do you not think that Mali drank black tea for two

days after the birth? Of course she did.

The fact that another woman kept these restrictions, and that she was a rich and influential other woman, totally validated Zakal's last statement in her own eyes.

Loss of blood after delivery is a worry to the women, in terms of impurity ideas and also of inconvenience. Black tea resembles old finished blood and so is preferable. (The Kutchi have many beliefs concerning sympathetic healing properties. Milk remaining in the stomach, solidifying, and heating is a terrifying prospect to them.)

A relatively new blouse is placed on top of the sleeping baby for the first few days. It is not the one the mother was wearing when she gave birth. When I questioned the women as to why this was done, there was rather more embarrassment than usual about such topics. One woman totally refused to admit that the blouse had been there. Another woman removed the offending object while I was in the room, pretending that it was just coincidence. However, it had been replaced when I returned later. Another woman, of considerable traditional wisdom, being the wife of a bhagat and a respected midwife, unusually refused to discuss the matter. She changed the subject and instead discussed the clothes gifted to the midwife, pretending that these were what I had seen. Her daughter looked ready to offer information, but was not permitted to speak.

This was towards the end of my research and proved an insurmountable topic - one area where I came to a more or less total standstill with questioning. One woman, whom I perhaps knew best, attempted some sort of reply:

Yes we do put a blouse on the newborn baby's bed. I don't know why, it is just the custom. They tell us that that is how it should be done, and we continue to do it.

The "they" above can be assumed to refer to the bhagats, who are always spoken of by women in this way. She smiled apologetically at the end of this statement, embarrassed about her lack of knowledge.

The only other woman from whom I received anything on the subject had previously angrily declared that the custom did not exist. However, having heard that the quoted woman had told me that they did, she altered her story.

Are you sure she told you? Oh well then, yes we do. It has to be as new as possible. Silk. Afterwards it is given back. Also a new pillow for the baby's head is given, and a new skirt, and a veil.

There seems to be a connection here with the death rites, where a blouse is again draped over the bed, and other types of silk female clothing are given for the ceremony and later returned. The meaning therefore, probably lies in terms of rebirth and the cyclically perceived nature of their life-stages; as much as to an association simply with breasts, milk and fertility.

The ritual bath must be taken by the woman on the second full day after the birth. In the hot season, the wait seems interminable for the dirty, sticky mother, confined to a dark, fly-ridden house. In winter however, the recovery time does not seem long enough. Kutchi women hate having to bathe in the winter, as it can be extremely cold in the open behind the house, with the howling north wind bearing down upon them. They are reluctant and miserable about the prospect, delaying the event of normal bathing as long as possible, and perhaps warming the water especially. Thus baths are taken very rarely, generally at midday, never on cloudy days, and as speedily as possible.

A neighbour, Mali, gave birth in January when the weather was bitterly cold. Fires were lit in the houses and people sat huddled around them. The second day after the birth arrived, with the weather threatening rain. I did not expect the ritual bath to take place and thought that some reason would be hastily invented to justify its postponement.

I was wrong however, and in the middle of the morning Mali bathed in water full of limbu leaves - a tree believed to possess healing properties. Her dirty clothes were left hanging on the bushes and she wore instead a completely clean set. I later asked the women of the

house if Mali had indeed had her purifying bath that day. They replied, "Yes, she had had to." They all motioned to their own skirts and pulled faces in total revulsion to demonstrate how soiled Mali's would have been if she had not washed. They then said defensively - "We warmed up water for her".

I asked whether the third day would not have done just as well, as that day had been so bitterly cold. They shook their heads at such an impossible thought, re-emphasising the importance of the second day, and stressing that they had given her warm water.

The mother is theoretically supposed to go outside the village after her bath and wash the quilt and her dirty clothes in the canal. (Quilts are sometimes burnt if they are too badly spoiled.) The above-mentioned woman was the only person I knew who did not do this washing herself. Instead, her husband's elder brother's wife was dispatched with them. The latter was reluctant and complained bitterly while undertaking this unwelcome task. She was generally lazy, but her chief disadvantage lay in the fact that she was also poor. In this way, even though she was married to the elder brother, she had to carry out many other such impure tasks for her husband's younger brother's even lazier wife. This transpired because it was the latter's natal village, in which she had much familial support. In addition, her husband earned his living in the city and helped his brother's family in many material ways, but gave his emotional allegiance to his wife rather than to his kin.

After her bath and change of clothes, the mother is permitted to return to sleeping or lying on a bed. Men become extremely embarrassed and reluctant to respond when asked why women cannot sleep on beds after giving birth. It is a taboo subject and as such can only be discussed between themselves in the fields (outside the village). The impurity and pollution involved at birth appear shocking to a man's world-view and for a woman to sleep on a bed at this time would be inconceivable, in addition to an insult to custom.

Women on the other hand are somewhat less worried by the prospect, presumably because they are the supposedly impure creatures in question. They also see the polluting aspects, but can perceive the possibility of alternative behaviour. They thus say that if a baby is born in town the woman does indeed sleep on a bed. They will however justify their practice on various counts - it is warmer on the floor; the bed and quilts would otherwise be spoiled by blood; it is the custom.

d) CUSTOMS FOR THE NEWBORN

Gradually the household returns to normal after a birth. The baby is washed carefully and regularly, and oil is applied to its body and hair. Charcoal is applied to the eyebrows and around the eyes themselves. The women say that if they did not do this the eyebrows would not be dark - which they much admire accompanying light skin. The shadow around the eyes is said to prevent the glare of the sun and thus headaches. Elsewhere it is reputed to have a connection with protection against the "evil eye", but the Kutchi say that it makes the children look nice and that is all. Older children are oiled and have their eyes applied in this way before special events or visiting. I have even seen a few young women doing the same, but this is rare.

The suggested connection would however make sense. It is whilst a person is young, beautiful and most vulnerable that he/she has to beware the "evil eye". From babyhood until approximately four years old, black bands or bracelets are put round the offspring's wrists and often its ankles. The "evil eye", is thus thought to be prevented from striking the child, as the former only covets nice things and black is thought of as an ugly colour.

Due to increased wealth amongst the Kutchi, and the wider availability of western pharmaceutical products, richer fathers are often dispatched into town by the women to buy things for baby. Being

predominantly non-literate, and therefore easily manipulable by shopkeepers, these men return with many products totally unsuitable for baby care. Hair lacquer is applied generously to baby's body, talc is used to whiten features, and vaseline is put on the eyes. Items brought from town are perceived by their nature to be good, beneficial, and "strong" as medicines. They possess the additional merit of bestowing prestige upon the owner. The women sit smugly, applying the potions, as other women watch enviously, determining, if they are ever wealthy enough, to purchase similar chemicals for their next child, or their daughter's, or daughter-in-law's. If poor, they can sigh, chide their husbands, and blame their child's failure to survive on the lack of such substances.

Of especial desirability at the time of study was "gripe water", a grey liquid sold relatively cheaply in town - contents unknown - used increasingly by the village women as a cure for all baby ailments. A baby would reputedly not be happy without it and most women possessed a bottle for all eventualities. Baby was forced to swallow this if ever it let out a mild mutter, and it became a matter of rivalry between certain rich mothers as to how much of the liquid the baby had succeeded in swallowing in one day.

While a baby is young, it is wrapped in cloths and sleeps on a wooden block with three sticks attached to it vertically in a triangular shape around its head. This block may be placed on the floor or on a bed. It is popularly thought to ensure that the child will grow with a beautiful round head - the preferred fashion in Sind for most ethnic groups.

Mothers also believe that they can alter the shape of a baby's nose by pushing the top of the nasal bone violently with their fingernails in order to make it grow straight. This causes pain, bleeding, infection and a swollen nose while practised. In the women's opinion however, this must be suffered for the sake of later conforming beauty. They believe that much can be done to alter and improve the baby that first arrives, and mothers who do not work their fullest at this will

later be accused of lazily disadvantaging their children.

e) NAMING:

Baby girls are theoretically named on the third or fourth day after birth. However, I have known families where it has not been decided what to call a girl many months after the birth. Fathers of many girls may express little interest in the naming process and their permission has to be obtained before a name can finally be settled upon. In general a girl's name is less official and less important. Nicknames or other preferred names are often given to them in early childhood and then the official name falls into disuse. After marriage, she will only be referred to by her relationship term in her affinal home.

Baby boys, on the other hand, are named at an elaborate ceremony called the sathi on the sixth day after the birth. This is again the predominant province of the women, who also play the major part in choosing his name. It is the men who do the inviting, the goat eating and the drinking of alcohol in celebration. Inside the house of birth however, the women are carrying out an indispensable ceremony at the same time. It is the women who are most polluted by birth and have the task of regulating it into social order. Of all the rituals, this is the one performed entirely by the women. They even cook the beans for it - cooking generally being subject to role reversal in the other ceremonies of Kutchi life.

Kin and affines arrive from miles around towards evening. The women greet the mother and other women of the house, and enter the internal ritual realm. The baby boy is referred to as lado (bridegroom) by all present. He has already been bathed and had his eyes charcoaled. He is dressed in a green shirt and has a green silk cloth on his head. (Green is their auspicious colour, predominant also at weddings.) He lies on the small bed, placed in the same position as it was after his birth.

The wife of a ritual specialist officiates, but her husband was found to have scant knowledge of what actually happens in this female ceremony. She and her assistant take their role very seriously, looking proud and self-important. At the same time, there is the worry that they might not be getting things exactly correct. Errors in ritual never upset the majority of women - it is simply the feeling of it and the intrinsic meaning which they perceive as essential. However, the officials do concern themselves with the format, perhaps to protect their reputations.

The mother plays basically no part in the proceedings. She sits pale and listless, feeding the baby beforehand so that he, hopefully, will not cry during the actual ceremony. Five large leaves are produced by the officiating female from under the baby's bedclothes. She chants while depositing a spoonful of the beans, clarified butter and raw sugar on one of the leaves. Then she pretends to write the boy's name on it with her finger, before placing the leaf at the top left hand corner of the little bed. The gesture is repeated, with the name of the boy's zach and village, as the remaining leaves are dealt with in a similar manner, and placed clockwise around the bed. The last leaf is put underneath the bed to symbolise the caste of Meghvar - leather-workers - believed by the Kutchi to be much lower than themselves.

The village children are all gathered outside the house with pots and spoons, preferably brass. They hit these together as loudly as possible, yelling - "X, Kapilo ! X, Kapilo!", several times. (X here standing for the boy's name.) After this, the filled leaves used in the ceremony are given to young boy representatives of related houses, kin and affines. Other village children arrive with plates of grain, and are given in return the cooked beans and cooked wheat grain. Once they have run away satisfied and some of the less closely related women have left, the female specialist gives a large brass spoon containing ghi and a lighted wick to the baby's phui (father's sister).

The phui proceeds to the wall the mother was facing when she gave birth, usually opposite the hearth. Accompanied by the "officials", who issue instructions, she passes the spoon under her right leg and pours the ghi down the wall, extinguishing the lighted wick. The number of channels that the descending ghi forms is supposed to represent the number of male children yet to be born to that household. This rite is considered to be secret by the women. Men reputedly do not know what takes place. The phui performs this to symbolise the zach, as the closest female kinswoman of the father. These ghi traces remain indefinitely, as the grease always re-emerges through fresh plaster.

The women melt away to eat, visit and talk. Some related men may then come into the house to greet mother and baby. Later in the evening, some of the women return to sing songs to the baby "bridegroom". There is only one specific sathi song. The rest are the songs rendered during the wedding period to the groom, and as such are bridegroom-specific rather than function-specific.

The men drink outside the house while this is taking place, hosted by the boy's father. Once over, the boy's banevi (father's sister's husband) gives the women some sweetmeats as a reward for their "work".

Fifteen days after the birth itself, a small family ritual occurs, where the husband, wife and close kin make ladu - an expensive delicacy, comprising coconut, chopped nuts, raisins, sugar, clarified butter and flour. This is partaken by the members of the hamlet to celebrate the continued existence of the boy, to symbolise the entry into a period of lesser birth impurity, and to incorporate the boy further into the village community. No such food is cooked for a baby girl. In the latter case, a girl of the house goes round the village with a brass drinking vessel of water - in which the tail of a cow has been dipped - and sprinkles it in the doorway of each house in purification.

3) INFERTILITY

Amongst the Kutchi, infertility is an extremely unenviable state, as in many other societies where emphasis is placed upon the woman's reproductive role. Although Kutchi women who have not had children look fatter, healthier and less tired than those who have had or are having their quota, they suffer much more from illnesses which could be termed psychological - headaches, stomach aches, dizzy spells and menstrual complaints.

There is also evidence of much more intra-familial conflict. The husband's family will continually find fault with what they see as a useless wife. They will pressurise the husband to withdraw his marital allegiance. In the cases I know of, he did not do so, although some strain was definitely present within the marriages. In some respects these couples could be seen as closer to each other, holding together in the face of public opinion and having had time to develop a sharing, caring marriage. On the other hand, they were possibly subject to more small-scale bickering and arguing than less close, fertile couples.

Other women will regard as inferior a woman with no children. Although they might like her personality and company, when it is a question of assessment and allegiance they will not support her. She is not seen to share their common interests and values. Without children she is a tolerated outcaste, an anomaly, sharing certain characteristics of the female group, but not sufficient to make her a member. Amongst the women, there will be rare reference to her home, her role as a wife is only grudgingly admitted. She is conceded only half a role and considered half a social being. She is criticised for her laziness, lax attitudes, relationship with her husband's family, and her reputed desire for material things. Accusations will flow as to her short-tempered and sulky nature - both of which may be fairly typical - but indicative of a response to social pressures rather than a character fault.

Children are involved in all work and social activities in the society. They are numerous and perpetually present, an integral part of the group. A few may disappear for a short time to play, but some always remain and the first group quickly re-appear. Women share the responsibility of looking after each other's children. All adults are constantly attentive in case danger befalls any child. Older children tend younger siblings. Mothers are only immediately necessary for their own children in the case of breast-feeding, which generally continues until the age of two to three, or until another child is conceived. Roles are more or less interchangeable. Married couples share the responsibility and pleasure of training and amusing the children.

Thus in many respects, childless couples cannot involve themselves in the life of the community. They are set apart, detached and treated with suspicion. Children play in their homes, but there is obviously no reciprocal agreement. Childless women therefore have to be more strict, keep their distance, tread carefully. Not possessing the most desirous of all commodities, it is suspected that they may be envious of those who do. They are thought to be liable to cast the "evil eye" upon coveted baby boys or beautiful baby girls. This results in a necessary distancing of the childless woman from the neighbouring children, showing no preferences, and generally being unable to relax and treat them in a "normal" manner.

The ideal traditional response where one wife was barren was to take another. The first cannot then leave, but remains married, undertaking the household work and helping with any forthcoming children. Some women admitted the possibility of friction within the home if this were to occur. Others maintained that it was a sign of the first wife's love, if she was happy to let her husband have sons from another woman. Possessing more than one wife is currently rare amongst Kutchi in Sind and no-one did so in the host or in other known villages. Justifications for this were that women were scarcer and therefore more expensive these days.

Certainly, some poor men had to wait until they were relatively old before their families could afford a first marriage for them, never mind a second. Rich men, on the other hand, indeed possess the buying power for another wife if they so desire. Perhaps the fact that they do not have connections with social change, perceived security through material wealth, and the increase of coveted consumer goods from Japan. For example, one man, who had no children from his first wife, bought a jeep and did not seem to have seriously considered buying a second wife instead, although this is what his family would have preferred.

Many examples were however given from recent past history of rich men and headman having many wives.

One man of the Zandariya zach had three wives at the same time. But he knew of the dangers of quarrelling and so he insisted that all three ate from the one plate. And if ever there was a quarrel, he would beat all three. He was a clever man indeed and they lived together with no set-backs until he died. Then each wife went her separate way and they all married again.

In male ideology, it is to the female that blame for infertility is attributed, with the exception of cases where the male is obviously physically damaged. Thus responses to the state are conducted in terms of the woman - taking her traditionally to a bhopa ("witch-doctor") for diagnosis, where a curse or spirit will be identified and a cure suggested. The bhopa will, for example, cast a spell on a thread and tie it to a part of the sufferer's anatomy; or he will prescribe the appropriate method of worshipping the clan deity with special offerings within the home.

Many of the traditional responses are these days tried initially, but there is an increasing tendency to attempt the cures of western medicine - pills and operations.

Mali, Zomi and Bozo's wife had operations to make them conceive. It worked with the first two, but not with Bozo's wife.

Some even omit the traditional responses going straight to the midwife in town. Male ideology attributes blame to the woman. Most women however are prepared to admit in secrecy the possibility of it being the man's fault. This tendency has probably increased in recent years, due to the steadfast belief in the total efficacy of western medicine, (provided it is practised correctly) , and the associated changes in attitude. If the "right" doctor has been visited, sufficient money paid, and many different cures been given to the woman, reasons are looked for elsewhere.

Especially in discussions where the talk is of a man who has had three wives and still no children, many older women state confidentially and with some relish:

It was in the man. It always was the man, for does not even kalar (bad/ unproductive) soil render up eventually what has been sown there.

If it is not in a man's fortune to have any, he won't have anything up here.

At the latter point, they gesture to their heads to indicate the semen store.

In popular belief, it is only men and women who are deserving - who act in socially commendable ways - who can have children, especially sons. This belief accounts for negative instances rather than justifies existing cases.

4) BIRTH CONTROL

If one is at risk from public condemnation for having no children, one is also at risk to a lesser degree for having too many. The ideal is to have babies with approximately two years' spacing and more frequent births are met with disapproval. Parents of children with only a year in-between are subjected to gossip and thought to be indulging themselves too much - perhaps even where birth impurity still remains. This is especially the case where the family are poor and therefore

badly fed and clothed, or where the parents find it difficult to control their children - always hitting them or shouting. Outsiders may then decide amongst themselves that the couple have had an excessive number of children.

Word has filtered in from the outside as to the existence of birth control pills and operations. Older women with several children, including sons, might occasionally be heard to say that they were going to stop becoming pregnant. Their husbands might also say so at other times. They would then ask me about pills; where to obtain them; how many to take. This never reached the point where they actually wanted the "medicine" enough to do anything positive about procuring it. However, they used to pride themselves on their examples of women who did practise birth control, and on their knowledge of sterilisation operations - all based upon hearsay.

Younger women, who had only one or two children, were astounded by the possibility of such prevention. Initially, they uttered disbelief and then shocked horror that women could want to do such a thing. Many used to take hours explaining to me how delightful and nice small babies were and what a good and necessary part of life.

Older women, who had fulfilled their quota, took a more relaxed and casual attitude, smiling amusedly at the prospect and not displeased by it.

Before, you had fifteen pregnancies but only three lived. Now, many more are living, and one does not need that many. One can manage to feed more of them these days, but three or four are still nice. Otherwise, one spends all day making food and still they say they do not have enough.

No woman I met however had actually stopped after three children, or would even have contemplated doing so. This they would claim could conceivably be all right for other women, but never for themselves. Anyone who voiced interest in birth control always had at least ten children already and were beginning to think this adequate. These women would tell me firmly that they wanted to stop having children, but one could perceive from the way they acted immediately

afterwards that they had no intention of doing anything about it "this time". As with everything, the women rely totally upon the attitudes and values of the female group and its conceptual support and solidarity. As yet, there is no real perceptual advantage to them as a group to practise birth control.

I hasten to add here, that I did not initiate the subject of birth control, either for research, feminist, or medical purposes. The women themselves wanted to discuss such things with me, as they had heard that Angres could "close up", and stop having babies. They were constantly amazed by how few they did have in comparison to themselves. All the above-mentioned attitudes evolved over the fieldwork period during day-to-day discussions and were not the result of me forcing issues of which they had no concern or comprehension. One aspect interesting in this connection was that generally in the talk about birth control, they were more interested in procuring pills simply to stop menstruation.

Traditionally, they have no forms of birth control, except for abstinence. They maintain a strong belief however, that it is impossible to conceive whilst still breast-feeding and before menstruation returns.

I am not pregnant. There is no possibility. My baby is so small, and I have been feeding her. It was the same with Nilo, my youngest son, the lugara did not come for twelve months. It was great. Some poor folk are soaked straight away. Chali's child was only small, and in arms, when her stomach was that big.

At this point she demonstrated on her own anatomy an approximately four month pregnant bulge.

CONCLUSION

In this part, there has been a wide exploration of women in their role as mothers. We have looked at the complex of values surrounding motherhood in this society and its importance as a defining principle of "self" in the female group. Women's beliefs concerning menstruation

and conception have also been illustrated, and wherever relevant contrasted with the opposing male views. The boy's naming ceremony, under the control of the female group, has also been described in detail.

Throughout the chapter as a whole, the "strength" of the female world-view has been apparent and the extent to which they are in control of, and actually define, those parts of the social environment which they perceive - and which is perceived by others - to be "theirs".

Photographs III



7. Women gathered to sing the wedding songs.

8. Women prepare the lolra.



9. The wedding ceremony (phera phar)

CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN WITHIN THE VILLAGE

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter concentrated upon the role of women within the structure of the family. Within it we looked at women's work, their everyday lives, their relationships, their traumas, their joys, and their values. These aspects take up the majority of women's lives, from the perspective of time, energy and perceived importance. Their ideas about things external to the family are much more limited, and bounded by convention or ignorance.

In this chapter, we begin to distance ourselves from the immediate family situation of the women. We pass into an intermediate area between the family and the world outside - the village. The village

illustrates aspects of both contexts - it encompasses some of the closeness of the family situation; and also some of the dangers of external society. Thus, although we will remain close to the everyday realities of women in this chapter, we will begin simultaneously to move away and present more of an overview of their social situation and their resultant encompassed mode of thought.

PART ONE: WOMEN, SPEECH AND THOUGHT

Introduction.

1) Female Conversation.

2) Female Speech and Thought.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In this first part of the chapter, we will focus upon the speech and thought of Kutchi Koli women. The first section will concentrate upon their forms of communication, which serve to delineate and maintain social relations and also to demarcate and emphasise social boundaries and priorities. The second section of this part will focus upon Kutchi women as thinkers and philosophers.

As a whole in this part therefore, women will be referred to in terms of their roles as communicators. We will thus look at the people with whom they communicate; the ways in which they do so; what is communicated; and perhaps something of its meaning.

1) FEMALE CONVERSATION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, whatever the relationship with husband or father, women spend the majority of their time with other women, within a segregated and visibly defined group. On the other hand, also as earlier stressed, political support can only ultimately be achieved from one's kin and even this may be inconsistent in practice. Female friendships between houses are short-term and fluctuating. At any given time, a woman has the choice of a few neighbouring women, with whom she can enjoy a temporary alliance. This is usually formed on the basis of some type of economic reason; a link forged because of the loan of some object or money; help needed in domestic or

agricultural labour; a faction formed because of some other woman's inability to volunteer repayment; or formed as a response to the above faction.

Thus, although there may appear to exist a close and strong relationship between two women at a given time, this never lasts for long, and the usual time-scale is less than a week. The neighbourhood pattern will then shift and a different set of alliances will be formed, equally short-term. The cyclical nature of the system makes itself apparent when the recent partners have become antagonistic to each other and there follows a return to the original set.

Reasons for arguments and antagonisms are manifold, especially in the insular, small-scale society of Kutchi women, where small insults and errors are greatly magnified as the women have few other political areas in which to exercise their imaginations and talents. Externally, we can therefore see that there is much bickering, due to face-to-face interaction and the lack of formal political outlet for female grievances. Personality clashes and points of contention are not discussed in any political arena and are only semi-acknowledged within the female group itself. This results in the frequent re-emergence of these grievances, but also facilitates their being temporarily forgotten or ignored if more important matters appear.

Women also make public the disputes of their husbands - it not being thought appropriate for men to be seen to argue. Women in contrast are perceived by both sexes as the appropriate channels for expressing dissent. (See also Wright 1981) This was evidenced earlier, in the section on Kutchi weddings.

The young wife will have a lesser chance of forming any type of friendship or political alliance. If she is very fortunate there may be another wife in a neighbouring house in a similar position. However, any contacts with her are liable to be minimal. Such relationships are viewed as politically dangerous and discouraged by the other women. A nod, a smile, a gesture indicating shared suffering are usually all that

can be risked. Exceptions to this occur at special village events, where the young wives may be sent to eat together at the most secluded part of the woman's mat. There they can hide behind their veils - vast quantities of rice disappearing via sturdy fingers into invisible mouths - keeping up a steady stream of whispers all the while.

Yet other young wives cannot be relied upon for support in times of crisis. Their own position being politically powerless, they can offer no help to someone temporarily worse off. For example, in the midst of a row and surrounded by antagonistic older women, Rami once said in desperation that she would go and seek Khanu's wife. At this, all the gathered women burst out laughing and Khanu's mother said sneeringly, "Why? What good do you think she will do you?" Rami looked at her, realised the total truth of her statement and in a panic retreated to her house. Khanu's wife was working at home while the scene was taking place, as were all the other young wives. She appeared amused when Rami's statement was reported to her, but made no sign of sympathy about the latter's situation.

Conversation is the manner in which Kutchi women choose to spend their time if permitted a choice. In many respects, it could be seen to conform to the term, "gossip", in that it is an important means of social control and is often biased, malicious and small-scale in nature. On the other hand, I feel that the term has often been abused by anthropologists, using it to denigrate female behaviour in opposition to more "important" male behaviour. I consider male "gossip" to be as much an existing pursuit - not so evident amongst Kutchi males as female "gossip" - I have nevertheless experienced it in other social situations where men are forced to interact in a small-scale manner and to compete for minimal political rewards. Therefore, in the thesis, I will generally refer to such forms of communication as "conversation", feeling the term to be less value-loaded.

Communicating with other women is a very important aspect of Kutchi women's lives. It could be seen as essential, in terms of conformity, group consciousness and self-esteem. A woman who keeps

more to herself than is the norm is treated with suspicion and hostility and frequently becomes a prime target for the conversation of others. Any item of information, no matter how small, has to be shared with ever-eager ears, dissected, digested and later regurgitated.

In some respects, it used to remind me of the old childhood game of "Chinese Whispers", where a story at the end of the chain, bore very little resemblance to the one at the start. Within one village, the differences were immense, especially depending upon the descent groups involved; zach members always supporting each other in opposition to those of other zach, regardless of the "facts of the case". By the time other villages had been reached however, the information was often beyond recognition. All news was thus assimilated and slotted easily into a predetermined mould or framework. Initial attitudes were affirmed in a self-fulfilling way and role stereo-types unquestioningly accepted.

Conversation is predominantly women's province. It is they who are the store-houses of information about the community - past and present - and they who attempt to use it politically to their own advantage. Husbands may share in their wives' discoveries, and sons in their mothers', especially if they have been absent from the village for a time and require up-to-date information. (See also Rogers 1975 for a similar situation in France; Wright 1981 in Iran.) Older men may join older women's circles, as here the boundaries are less well defined and there is more inter-sex communication. In addition, men at this age have less external contacts and perhaps feel themselves to be politically relatively powerless and inadequate.

Basically, however, Kutchi men are much more private, self-contained people, who hesitate to share personal information with other men. Their conversation focusses upon things rather than people and in general they have less interest in storing information about conversations and arguments, although they may do so in particular instances where they are personally involved.

For women, however, single sex conversation groups are an integral part of village life and inter-village communication. They are the chief form of leisure activity and of relaxation. Through them, the shared female conceptual bonds are maintained. What I am stressing here however is a mode of thought, not a political expression of solidarity. Women will happily engage in long sessions of talk, when there is little work to be undertaken at home or in the fields. In winter, for the major part of the cold mornings and evenings spent huddled around the fire, this is the main pursuit; also through much of the heat of the day in the hot season. Even when there is light work to be done, at home or in the fields, talk is used by the women to lighten their tasks and to make the time spent in doing them pass more quickly.

In this way, cotton-picking can be seen as a very pleasurable occupation, albeit hot and prickly, in that it enables women from far parts of the village, who would otherwise rarely see each other, to exchange information and opinions. Here, in the fields, outside the village and therefore also distant from some internal norms of behaviour, and yet unusually, free from the presence of men - women indulge in bantering and joking, usually of a sexual nature.

If one woman decides that her house or hearth need plastering, that a quilt needs sewing, that grain needs cleaning, it often serves as a signal for all the women in proximity who can be spared, to gather around her, helping in major or minor ways, sometimes just taking advantage of the opportunity to talk. Such occasions afford much pleasure, but must never run the risk of being designated "idle" or "lazy", against which "work" excuses must be maintained.

On the other hand, despite the elements of enjoyment and social activity that such opportunities present, there is also an obvious degree of fear. This stems from the lack of mutual trust amongst the female group. Thus, whenever a group of women meet, there is the perpetual worry for outsiders as to what is being said and for insiders what will be said when they leave. I have watched and

participated in this process more times than I can remember. Here I will only give two examples.

The first was when we were all sitting in a neighbour's uthak, quite a large group of women, the men attending a feast in a nearby village. The theme of the conversation was another village woman, who was not at the gathering and totally out of earshot. Her general behaviour was discussed, her improprieties, relationship with her husband, manner in which she bathed, and her attitude to work. Most present had something to contribute - some in perceived opinion more shocking than others, but all eliciting support, agreement, and the nodding of covered heads.

The conversation continued a long time, repeating itself, turning round in circles, occasionally lunging into fresh ground, and then fast reverting to the stagnant. A few were becoming bored, there was no longer a united attack, minds were beginning to wander towards children and household tasks. One woman accumulated her youngest children, and left the group. When she had reached the next house, the conversation miraculously revitalised itself. What she had been doing for the last few days was discussed, the amount of clothes and jewelry she possessed, the bad treatment she gave to her children, her past misdemeanours amongst her natal group.

Gradually however, this theme was also exhausted and another woman, whom duty called, detached herself from the group. Once again, this was all that was needed to start the remaining assembly. Her meanness, her gossiping tongue, her proud attitude, all were cheerfully chewed over and relished. At first shocked, later bemused, and later still trying to control an urge to giggle, I watched fascinated, as one after the other the women left the circle, and each was accorded similar treatment.

Finally, when there were only three of us left, the two Kutchi women, who had been verbally tearing to pieces the fourth last, suddenly stopped, looked at each other embarrassedly, and began

gigglingly to pick themselves up and leave for their own work. They obviously felt a quiet satisfaction at having out-stayed and out-talked everyone - this time. (This was at the stage of my fieldwork where I understood most of their conversations, but my speech was not good, in terms of speed, accuracy and accent. The women were therefore somewhat ill at ease with me in such situations, as they were uncertain as to how much, or how little, I was understanding.)

The second example is more connected with the fear of exclusion, as all the women were conscious that the former type of incident was constantly taking place. I found that it was never the system itself which the women felt to be at fault, nor could anyone perceive any possibility of change or improvement. Vicious gossip existed, had always done so, and had been internalised and accepted from childhood. What was perceived as important was attempting to ensure that one was always one of the "in-group" at any point in time. Of course such dreams were unrealistic and recognised as such - everyone knew the impossibility with all the work that had to be done. However, age would bring an increase in such political rewards and was probably eagerly anticipated for this reason.

The following example took place when I was visiting another village, with a few women from the host village. It was the day before an important ceremony at the zach temple, this zach being predominant in the village as a whole. It was an opportunity to renew contacts between women who had not seen each other for a long time, to indulge in talk and to have a comparatively relaxing day before the busy preparations for the festival itself.

Our hosts were Buro, and his sister Nena, who had had a sister exchange form of marriage and now lived in adjoining houses in their own hamlet with their respective partners. Buro and his wife, Ratani, had been unable to have any children after seven years of marriage. Nena and Karam had two sons for most of the fieldwork period and a baby girl was born a month before I left. Buro and Ratani had obvious tensions in their marriage due to the lack of children, but generally

they were well adapted to each other and enjoyed each other's company. Nena and Karam, on the other hand, barely tolerated each other, were constantly bickering, frequently separate, and were actively interested in other sexual partners.

Nena resented Ratani's close relationship with Buro, the fact that they discussed things together, and that Buro would always make decisions in favour of his wife rather than his sister. Ratani resented Nena's attitude, the fact that she had children and her associated status within the society. In general, they loved gathering separately with the women, in order to speak of how bad the other was. Nena had the definite advantage in this however. Recipients of comment from Nena's sharp tongue may temporarily enjoy hearing nasty things about her to reinflate their self-esteem; but basically Nena was more popular because of biology rather than character. Having had children, Nena could be accepted as a total person, a proper Kutchi woman, not a worrying misfit, an inauspicious anomaly.

The day in question, Ratani sat to entertain and talk to us all, while Nena was preparing the tea. Ratani took the opportunity of her absence to tell us all about Nena's terrible deeds and behaviour in the recent, and not-so-recent, past. Nena was aware that she was doing this as she kept poking her head out of the door to try and hear what was being said, especially when the conversation grew more intense, or there was laughter.

The tea made, the roles were reversed. Ratani had to tidy up afterwards and sweep the uthak, while Nena was able to sit and talk to the guests. The conversation this time was, if anything, more vicious. Nena was able to vent her feelings about Ratani's purported laziness, her flirtations with men, her power over her husband, and her unwillingness to share the workload with Nena. In return, sympathy was given to Nena from the assembled listeners and also further fuel was added to her grievances, as had happened to Ratani previously. Ratani, meanwhile, was practically falling over her sweeping-brush in the bodily contortions that resulted from her desperate attempts to listen to

the talk and yet simultaneously prove that she was working hard.

That Nena's stories were the ones accepted as truth by the visiting women was because of her motherhood and also because many of the women came from the same zach, both visitors and village inhabitants. A daughter is always preferable to a son's wife and this involves other kinship extensions in Kutchi society. In this way, social acceptance and evaluation of gossip are generally predetermined. Knowing this, Ratani nevertheless has to try.

As a form of social control, conversation can be very effective, but was also observed to have its limitations. Generally it can be said that small-scale transgressions are possible within the society, but rarely major ones. The actors have to assess the possible rewards as against the undoubted retribution. (See Bailey 1969, for this form of analysis.) For most of the people, most of the time, to behave outwith society's bounds and precepts is simply not worth it. Conversation as a social activity and a social force is implicit in some form in all female behaviour from young to old.

2) FEMALE SPEECH AND THOUGHT

The above conversations, of course involve speech, but as I mentioned in the theoretical introduction, Kutchi women seem, in our terms, to find it difficult to express themselves. This is in response to the questioning and attitudes of outsiders, or men, as a perceptually external group. In their own terms, it later becomes apparent to the anthropologist that they maintain their own mode of expression, which occupies a parallel but opposing place in the social context in which they operate. This has probably developed because of their subordinate and exploited gender position in the political and economic structure. Such a response is reputedly common amongst those groups perceived from the outside as being exploited. (See Ardener, S. 1978.)

Kutchi women, however, although undoubtedly so in our terms, do not perceive themselves to be exploited by men. Things are as they are. It is social fact, and there is no challenge to this arrangement or presented alternative from any of the other groups in the area. What they have accepted as natural is therefore not a cause for them to devalue themselves. Their response applies successfully within its own context and indeed this is the only situation where it needs to be relevant. Where they are able to evaluate themselves in a superior manner is in terms of other ethnic groups and this context will only briefly be reflected upon here, as it will feature strongly in the next chapter.

Amongst Kutchi men, there are definitely changing patterns of language identification. More and more men are able to converse in Sindhi, and some even in Urdu. Education is valued for sons and it is seen as an advantage for them to learn to speak and write in the language of the politically more powerful. In this way, Kutchi males from a relatively early age know how to communicate effectively with certain segments of the outside world. According to wealth and personality, some communicate more effectively than others, but all communicate with far greater skill than the female group. There are of course differences within the latter group, generally dependent upon the degree of contact they have had with Sindi women, in terms of place of residence and work. No woman can read or write, however, and conversation is in addition limited to older females of certain ethnic groups. The subject matter revolves around general topics of female interest - work, money, children and ritual. There is thus no challenge to the accepted roles of Kutchi and other women, in terms of either group.

In the host village, hardly any contact was necessary between Kutchi and Sindi women, due to the earlier mentioned fact of Kutchi land-owners. The Kutchi women felt powerless as a sex in the world beyond the village, but not as an ethnic group. Those who could speak Sindhi were occasionally able to converse with itinerant beggars and

peddlars. Generally, they were not proud of their skill, but treated it as if it were a fairly commonplace household acquisition, which did not bestow any particular status or prestige, such as an axe, bowl or bucket.

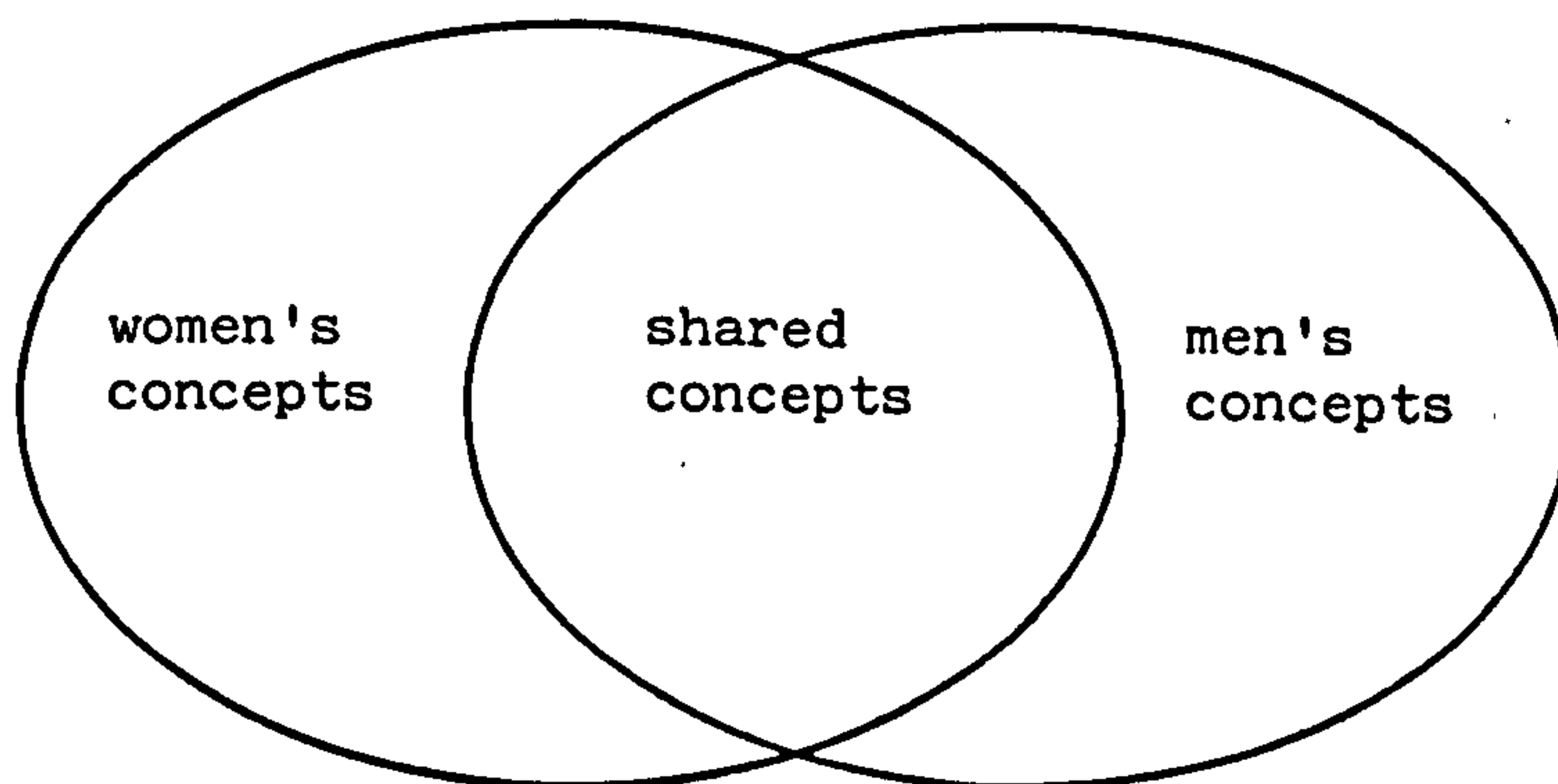
Thus, we can see that men perceive the advantage of external communication skills and that they are not an option, but a requirement for males in this society. In contrast, women do not perceive the need for such skills and have not wished to develop them. Their own "speech" is sufficient within their encapsulated social environment. Much of their communication is in fact implicit and embedded within the female value system and is associatedly unvoiced. They are thus unpracticed at expressing their ideas to those who do not share their assumptions.

In general, the Kutchi are pragmatic, fatalistic, and not prone to discussing ideas or alternative concepts. They are very accepting of life and their own explanations of it. Women philosophise less than men, finding themselves uneasy in this type of medium, feeling that they lack the appropriate tools and frequently becoming bored.

I think however, that it is important to examine this topic, because although Kutchi philosophy is scarce, what does exist may therefore prove significant. From it we can gain insights into stable and unstable areas of thought. If they perceive their existence to be fragile in terms of the political and economic environment, they perhaps cannot afford such instability in their ideas. What is reflected upon may therefore be "outside" the danger zone and questioning in other areas may be perceived as a threat to world-view. The section may also help us to discover hypothesised discrepancies between male and female types of thought.

Men will philosophise over a smoke of cannabis, occasionally sitting in the fields, or around the family fire in the cold season. The latter often consists of the telling of tales, in which old women are often

included, sharing former memories with relish. If younger women are present at all, their role is to listen, definitely not to contribute. In this way, there is some sharing and intersection of beliefs and understandings between men and women. But there are also certain elements maintained purely by men and certain elements purely by women. Thus, for example, men will not discuss the external social system and its perceived inequalities with the women; women will not discuss their ideas about conception with the men. Yet both sexes will share concepts about helpful deities, or harmful djin which plague the lives of the villagers. (Diagram, in which I make some provision for what husbands and wives may discuss in private.)



Younger women, by definition, have less opportunity or possibility of joining in with mixed groups, even if they should so desire. They have from childhood developed a shared way of looking at reality, very dissimilar to that of the men. Older women, in contrast, can present themselves "bilingually" in certain contexts. They have "learned" to express themselves in a male manner, but they simultaneously share the attitudes and values of the female group in which they have spent the majority of their lives. Thus, some old women have the ability to account for infertility in different modes, depending upon the social context. They may express the male interpretation in mixed groups, but when with women, they will express an alternative female interpretation, which reaffirms an inner female pride and may in fact implicitly ridicule male explanations.

Discrepancies also exist between men and women in the interpretation of bodily functions and body composition. This is perhaps due to the fact that it is mainly men who have anything to do with death and the killing or dissecting of animals.

As stressed earlier, women spend much more of their time in talk than do the men. This involves chatter about persons, values and attitudes - answers to the who and what questions - rather than the hows and whys. Yet although rare, they do occasionally reflect and examples of such meditations are here illustrated.

Once, out in the fields while picking cotton, one woman noticed that there was a moon (half) in the sky in broad daylight, along with the sun. There followed some subtle musings as to whether there were four moons, all travelling in different directions. Not having come to a satisfactory conclusion, they decided that only Ishvar (The Supreme Deity) could explain really.

This, in fact, was the most common response, having explored their own experiential parameters - as to why twins are born; as to why a boy rather than a girl is born; as to why calamities happen to some people; as to why certain men are infertile; or even as to why Meghvar

do not become ill if they eat carrion.

A standard response to the why questions concerning ritual, consisted in saying, "Because we have always done it this way. The ancestors did it like this." Such a reply would emerge as to why women are served before men at feasts; as to why certain foods are eaten on ritual occasions; as to why they practise avoidance; as to why they hold their veils in such a way in greeting; and as to why rites are as they are.

Resorting to Ishvar or their traditions were the commonest ways of escaping difficult questions; without having to apply thought where none had previously been applied. Otherwise, perhaps an impatient, "I do not know, ask so-and-so, he/she is bound to be able to tell you." Or a circularity of response is used - "We do this because we do"; "We avoid hahara (affinal males), because hahara must be avoided."

These types of explanation are not in the least surprising, considering the limitations of their social environment, their lack of literacy or an alternative mode of thought. Neither is the existing social climate conducive to the development of ideas. They are not valued by either sex in the culture, where the preference is for efficiency of function and anything else is deemed irrelevant or lazy.

As we have seen, men have wider realms of social experience and interaction and their responses are generally constructed in a manner more acceptable to outsiders than are those of the women, with more coherent, internal reasoning. They will also hazard many more guesses as to why such and such should be so. Their replies are longer before finally resorting to Ishvar and the ancestors. Yet I must stress that they too generally fall back upon unicausal explanations outwith their control. The men are also chiefly non-literate. I therefore do not mean to suggest that men are "good" at giving answers and that the women are "bad". Neither sex is "good" in these terms, but men happen to be generally "better". (See Ardener, E. 1975.)

The resultant female mode of expression is implicit and embedded. To begin with, as with speech, women are reluctant to hear their thoughts aired out loud. They lack confidence in the expression of self, especially within a large group. In such a case, they will always defer to the "superior" external knowledge of an old woman - post-menopause - who is a source of story-tales and myths, and also of their interpretation. This deference over information is extremely common. Even when dealing with ritual rules and traditions, responsibility is accorded to external characters. "They say that we must do this." With increased questioning, women will eventually say that the "they" in question are the Bhagat (religious leaders). These are never Bhagat from the village, who are not considered to be very "good", but external, all-powerful, all-knowing Bhagat, who are reputedly in control of Kutchi ritual traditions and practices and are in the process of up-dating some of them. (With no direct contact and a striking resemblance to the ascribed powers of Ishvar, to outsiders it may occur that none actually exist. Kutchi women believe that they all do however, somewhere "out there".) For example, when talking about death rites - "They say that we must do this, or we are not Kori (Kutchi)". The Bhagat, reputedly talking about the same rites, "Aren't you Kori, that you do not do things this way?"

Men are less likely to attribute sources to the Bhagat, relying more upon the basis of their traditions within the Shastras (Hindu religious books), or else upon the simple way things have been changing and evolving over the years. Perhaps women attribute more to the Bhagat, because they do not have as much opportunity to hear their teaching themselves, Bhakti (rituals of devotion) being predominantly male affairs. Women may sit nearby, but rarely understand what is happening. Female partial exclusion from such events may make them attribute to them more importance than is actually the case.

External pressures are however felt by the women and most are attributed to the invisible "they". On matters such as the market, the law, and the "system", women make a sharp division between the

internal village world and the unpredictable, yet threatening, external environment. Having said this however, I do not think that in most respects they feel the reality of this environment. (This theme will be examined in chapter five.)

At this point, I will simply present an amusing example of how the outside is seen as relatively irrelevant and possible to ignore. Internal village and internal group are believed by the women to be secure and strong in their own attitudes and methods. The example is also reminiscent of the solidarity displayed in a childhood group.

Mali had visited a doctor in town and had been told not to eat peppers because of the ear infection from which she had been suffering. Back in the village, she played with her moro (bland/tasteless) food and disliked the prospect of eating it. The other women, sympathetic and realising her terrible plight, quickly added some peppers to her food, saying that the doctor would never know. (This raises interesting points as to their beliefs in doctors, their reasons for going outside the village to seek medical help, the perceived connection between foods and cure, as well as to the above-mentioned concerns.)

As I stressed earlier, with regard to speech, women are very dubious about expressing information and knowledge as to their ideas, rites and beliefs. They very soon think of themselves as being out of their depths and turn giggling for male, or preferably other female support. They also tend to become nervous if they think that their words are to be written down.

Yet they do have certain reasoned accounts of phenomena. Generally, these are in internal, strongly bounded areas, in which they feel at ease and which they perceive as their province. Menstruation, conception and birth are the major of these and some of these views have been looked at earlier. I will therefore only give a few examples here, which are illustrative of female thought and reason.

a) Women "know" that if they "shape" a young baby's face they will make it pleasing to look at in later life and are therefore in some respects in control of its destiny. (This accords with many of their ideas of women being responsible for birth and life.)

b) When women talked about the death of Rami and Nilo's baby, implicit in their assumptions was the fact that the latter were bound to have stolen some missing money. "Why else would that baby have died at birth?" (This illustrates their ideas of sin and justice.)

c) A mother of twins explained why one was of much lighter skin than the other - "Yes, I must have seen a lot of people. One white, and one black in the one stomach." (This is typical of the concept of resemblance and conception.)

d) When the women talked about calamities which had befallen one specific village, they attributed it to a bhut (ghost/spirit).

Zati - "That village has something about it. There are many people from there who have been similarly seized with madness."

Reti - "It must be some pir (Moslem saint) who is scolding them. Those seized with madness have been taken to the bhopa (witch-doctor) and cured, but then someone else is seized."

(This illustrates their beliefs on attribution and also their sense of fatalism in terms of the aspects of their lives which they perceive as being outwith their control.)

e) When they discussed why one village woman always used my knife when cutting up meat, it was said - "It is because Netha does not eat chicken herself. So she wants to keep herself free from the impurity of the blood or its smell and touch would ruin/ pollute her other food." (This accords with their attitudes towards death and pollution, which are outwith the female realm. From it, we also glimpse a reason or justification for the increasing number of Kutchi female vegetarians.)

f) When they described varying lengths of pregnancy, it was said - "If

you are big, it has to run a longer course. Small babies come earlier. Big ones come late." Or - "Young women often have them after eight months. Old women have to wait as long as ten for theirs." (This is indicative of an area about which they have thought and about which they feel certain.)

(The women have similarly assured attitudes in terms of their own position in opposition to members of other ethnic groups. Chapter five will look at this in depth.)

Thus, when talking about something close and which they feel they know much about, women can rely upon their own theories and ideas, instead of resorting to stock responses or giving deference to other people.

Some men, especially young ones, may feel equally unsure about proffering explanations. The difference is however, that they will generally make the attempt. The manner in which they do so, illustrates the fact that they are inventing in response to questioning and that it is something about which they have previously never thought.

For example, I can contrast Nilo's explanation of why many women smoked in a neighbouring Kutchi village, to the somewhat shorter and more authentic-sounding one later proffered by his mother:

It is because smoking is good for the blood. If you smoke, your blood does not go bad and the children you bear will be stronger and survive. If you do not smoke, the children will be more likely to die when small.

When I pointed out that there were many healthy children in the host village where the mothers do not smoke, whereas they were less healthy in the neighbouring village, his limp response was the following, "Oh, it is really up to the mothers". His mother's response to the question was, "Oh well, if their husbands let them smoke, then it is all right."

From here, we can move to the religious/ ritual realm, which in some

respects illustrates another area of thought.

A change comes over the Kutchi when they start talking about the Supreme Deity or religious matters. Their faces take on a serious expression. There are few smiles. An uncusomary humility comes to the fore. Heads shake sadly about their own lack of knowledge and Ishvar's greatness. Eyes periodically look upwards and hands make gestures to the heavens. Things said reflect a certain sombreness, because these are serious things being discussed. No signs of the usual Kutchi laughter and chatter, instead there exudes a fatalistic approach - a recognition of their own inadequacies and a respect for all the unseen powers of the universe. In addition, there is a deep respect and reliance upon the written word.

One person states that Ishvar brings rain and so how can they possibly grumble if the wheat is spoilt because of it. "It is Ishvar's will. What can we do?" There exists total recognition of a dependency upon unpredictable and incomprehensible divine will. "He gives children and He takes them away." "He gives sons to some; daughters to others; and none to others, poor things."

Usually, once one person has given an illustration of what Ishvar has given - be it trees, crops, buffalo or babies - others, not to be outdone, will immediately contribute with other examples. Then the conversation will take on an even more religious, but competitive tone, especially amongst the women.

Ritual life also has an aura of mysticism and uniqueness about it. It is believed by the women never to have been taught and to be impossible to forget. This does not mean that actual words and many of the practices cannot be forgotten, in fact they often are; but the experience itself, and the meaning, is always perceived in its entirety. Precise details are not important to them, provided that the feeling behind them is expressed, and it is this feeling which is unforgettable to them.

To a question such as, "Who teaches you the wedding rites?", they would respond exasperated and scathing, "No-one teaches us. We just know. We have always known. Who could forget them?"

Nor can features or meanings be extracted from the total situation. In this respect, it is a highly embedded mode of thought. Time after time, when trying to elicit the meanings of the wedding songs, I came up with this type of response:

"I cannot remember the words at this time of year, because it is hot. I will remember them in the cold".

"If we hear the songs, we might remember them."

"If you sing the songs once you are in your own country, you will understand them."

They were thus unable to abstract the elements and conceive of them separately. At the appropriate time, of course, they knew them faultlessly and could start with very little prompting from the "big women". They could not at other times, however, separate the components from the event. They have general feelings about their songs and rites. They know the story patterns that they are singing about; but they usually cannot separate certain parts or even extrapolate word meanings and explain them. Something used in a ritual situation will be described, but its meaning cannot be transferred to another situation.

In conversation, they never discuss their rituals or their meanings; never whys or wherefores. Things are just there and accepted because they always have been. Girls learn from copying their mothers, perfecting until they get it right. Whys are immediately squashed and answered with, "It is done this way, that is all." They know the feelings that should be felt in every ritual situation. Therefore, they can easily evoke them from their subconscious, whatever the time or place, but only if the event is perceived to be real at the time. The women are not used to imagining, analysing or abstracting. Men are much "better" at these things, if they can apply themselves or are interested.

X
Here I feel it appropriate to return to a methodological point. The apprehension of the sentiments and emotions of one's informants may take time initially. On the other hand, it may also prove more difficult to understand their cultural response to these emotions and even to realise that it is a cultural rather than a natural form of behaviour. A methodological problem in participant observation may arise not in terms of the stirring of one's own emotions, but the appropriate cultural period of release and termination. The cultural responses to sentiment run deep and involve an imperceived structuring by participants. The people we live with in the field have different structures and responses surrounding their sentiments. They may appear hard-hearted or too emotional. Their wailing or grieving may stop abruptly and switch to something pragmatic. In these cases, it is not the sentiment which is so hard to understand, but the structure; the opening and the closing ; the turning on and turning off.

For the Kutchi, ritualised but "authentic" emotions are summoned up easily at the appropriate time. Wedding and funeral wailing present an immediately visible picture of the very deep, emotionally disturbing action that is taking place.

A girl will always cry when she becomes a bride; so will those close to her. Likewise, she will cry if her baby dies, her brother, her parents, her husband. Rituals for all the life-cycles are so clearly defined and dramatised that each person knows how to fill their appropriate role. Thus, if a woman is not particularly close to the current girl about to be married, she can remember her own marriage, or that of her sister, or of her daughter. These will all easily conjure up the necessary emotional force. Likewise with death - every Kutchi has had some type of contact with it and can provide the appropriate responses. If not, they can always envisage someone who has left the village.

They are quite frank about what they are doing in this:

"We cry for our own children that we have lost. Not necessarily for the one that has just died."

"We remember at Divari all the ones who were with us in the

past, but have now gone. It is a sad time."

"We weep for the one dead, and for all our other memories."

Perhaps in this respect, we can say that emotions can be abstracted and somewhat analysed, even if concepts cannot. This is because ritualised emotion is very much more real to Kutchi women than arbitrary concepts and questioning of western construction. (See Bourdieu 1977). Perhaps the latter concepts are closer to the men, who play little part in dramatised emotion. (See also Harris 1980) The reality of Kutchi women is bounded by their total social situation and cannot be extracted from it. Within this reality lies meaning, but contextual meaning, not analytical.

CONCLUSION

In this part, I have concentrated upon female communication and thought. The first section looked at conversation and illustrated its importance to Kutchi women, in terms of a shared vehicle for expression, a means of social control, and as a mode by which to discourage difference and thereby emphasise the solidarity of the Kutchi female group. Speech was seen not to be of essential importance for this. Much of their communication followed pre-existing categories and stereo-types and as such was implicit in the definitions of the female group.

Men were seen as the communicators with the outside world and therefore more skilled in expressing their concepts to those outwith their immediate social environment. On the other hand, they were seen to rely more upon the communication of women in the internal village realm.

In this last section, we have focussed upon thought and the forms this takes amongst the Kutchi female group. We have looked at examples of their responses to certain situations; their insecurity in many areas; and their assurance and security in those sectors of life

which they define as their own. We have focussed upon the stereo-typed answers to which they frequently resort and, in contrast to the men, their reluctance to invent. Latterly, we have looked at the female expression of ritual. This illustrated their way of dealing with reality from a dramatised and embedded point of view, based upon a shared understanding of their common state, and probably also upon the necessity of a conceptual opposition, in this case male.

In both communication and thought therefore, the women are seen to have different responses to the men. This is seen to be on account of the tools each have at their disposal, the environment to which they have access for explanation, and its associated constraints.

PART TWO: WOMEN AS RITUAL SPECIALISTS

Introduction.

1) Death.

2) Festivals.

a) Hachmo.

b) Hutani.

c) No'Northa.

d) Divari and Parwa.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, the focus will be upon the female role in ritual. Two of the ceremonies in which women play a major role, weddings and naming, have been looked at briefly in the preceding chapter. Here I will therefore concentrate more generally upon the ritual realm, drawing various fundamental themes together, and focus upon particular Kutchi ceremonies where the women play a prominent role.

Perhaps it will seem odd to talk of women as ritual specialists. They certainly could not perform many of the rituals without men and in this respect could be defined rather as practitioners. On the other hand, they are specialists, because this is the main sphere, apart from childbearing, in which they, as women specialise. They perceive this to be their domain, their province, and one of the main validations of their position within the society. Men need no such obvious validation of their social roles; their importance within both Kutchi and the wider society is taken for granted - economically, politically, and conceptually.

Thus, although men mostly provide the organizational backing for rituals, it is the women who provide the content, the motivation and the enthusiasm.

Comparing Kutchi customs with those of other social groups, men frequently appear ashamed, shy, or keen to emphasise changing patterns. They also tend to rely more upon external value-systems, such as how the Moslems and Indian Hindus do things, and how Kutchi rituals have their origins somewhere in Hindu scripture. Women, however, compare themselves much less to other groups, (not surprising as they have little direct experience of them), and stress the continuity of their rituals. "We do things this way, because our ancestors did". Or - "We have always done things in this manner." Or - "If we did not do it this way we would not be Kori."

This results in opposing attitudes between the male and female groups, where the women exhibit social pride and the men manifest social embarrassment. In the rituals, men are more inclined to use the reference points of a wider society and are relied upon by the women to do so. Women's part in ritual is focussed more upon their own small-scale group, its inner momentum, often its inner locality, which is perceived by them to be self-sufficient.

Another point to be noticed is that in many rituals, the theme carried out is undertaken by women for men. This is especially apparent in the life-cycle events of birth and death where overtly little emphasis is placed upon female life or importance.

For example, a woman would say contemptuously:

You do not do a naming ceremony for a female child. It might be given a name eventually, but that is all.

There is thus a de-emphasis of the role of individual females but a quiet recognition of their group importance in maintaining fundamental social institutions.

By the above, I do not mean to imply that men have nothing to do with Kutchi rituals. They do play a very important part. In a society with a strong sexual division of labour in all activities and spheres, it is only to be expected that both sexes play vital and complementary roles in the ritual realm. I am not therefore claiming that women donate the chief or essential ingredient in any given ritual, or that in reality ritual is Kutchi women's total province; what I am suggesting is that it is a question of attitude.

Women have pride in ritual and this is their only outlet for out-of-the-ordinary practices. They think of it as "theirs", await it with enthusiasm, reminisce over past occasions, argue as to correct procedures, and generally treat their role in it as parallel to other types of supremely female work. Men too predominantly regard ritual as women's province, pleasure, responsibility and tradition. They play down their own part in the proceedings, emphasise that of the women, refer to events in a less serious and more haphazard manner, and generally devalue the importance of ritual in the culture. Women are aware of male attitudes in this, but they do not affect their own opinion of ritual which is never devalued amongst the female group.

Individual, more traditionally-orientated men, may be exceptions to the above, but even they echo it to a certain extent. Both sexes have basically apportioned the responsibility to the women.

At this stage, I feel it appropriate, to draw a distinction between men in general, and essential male ritual practitioners, such as the bhopa and the bhagat, or certain important categories of kin and affines at life-cycle rituals. These men do play an extremely important part in rituals. Certain women, simply by virtue of being married to such men, play important roles in birth and naming rituals. Their distinction is not achieved through individual merit but through marital alliance and is widely recognised as such.

Leaving aside these specific practitioners, there is however, a difference in ritual matters between men as a group, and women as a group. Whereas all women of kinship or affinal relation will be expected to gather and perform certain customary practices, similar practices are not expected of the male group as a group although they may be of specific individuals. Likewise, although men may indeed be present because of kinship obligations, emphasis is placed upon them being there rather than doing. It is a question of an individual being there rather than a group acting corporately.

Thus, although women are chiefly connected to the chief actor in some way, they may well not be. Women's rituals have to be performed and in this context, one woman can substitute for another very easily or may simply take part to augment the numbers. Men must always be involved in some way with the person undertaking the life-cycle ritual. Male outsiders are rare. There may be some parallel in this with marriage and exchange where for men it is their own specific identity which is important, whereas in male ideology women are substituteable and interchangeable.

Birth and death are the unpredictable and irregular life-cycle events in Kutchi life. Marriage occurs in the cold season and is performed and regulated by both sexes, with predictable pre-organisation and ritual. Interspersed in the Kutchi calendar, are No'Northa, Divari, Parwa, Hutani (Holi), and Hachmo - the Hindu festivals which they celebrate. In addition to the above, Rha'o (religious feasts) take place for a variety of reasons. They are generally given by a wealthy member of the community - to celebrate the birth of a son or grandson, or perhaps his later birthday; to commemorate the death anniversary of an influential man; to substitute for the larger funeral rite in the case of the death of a baby; or simply to celebrate some extreme good fortune.

The Kutchi believe that good fortune must be shared with the rest of the community or else the "evil eye" will strike. They believe

similarly in the sharing of misfortune and misery in the sense that, when grief is apportioned to every member, the load of the individual is much lighter and easier to bear. Women take very little part in these feasts. The catering is done by the men. The ritual is officiated over by a bhagat, and his assistants. Bhakti (devotional singing), takes place to entertain and teach the men, and involves the gaining of dharam (religious merit) by those attending.

Women enjoy these occasions as refreshment from their usual work and activities. They have the opportunity to chat with female visitors from other villages. The food is good. They may perhaps enjoy listening to the Bhakti from the side-lines. They do not view these as women's enterprises however. An analogy would be that they are more like attending someone else's party than giving one's own.

Kutchi life-cycle rituals have many themes and elements in common. They emphasise the continuity of life, and its perceived cyclical nature in terms of a scarcely-mentioned, but basic adherence to reincarnation. Thus, as I have already described something of the naming and wedding rituals in chapter three, I will here focus upon death and the festivals.

1) DEATH.

Whereas birth is mediated mainly by the women, and marriage by both sexes, death, apart from the initial ritual wailing is mediated mainly by the men. These emphases are of degree, not of total bounded category and it is of course the business of all social actors to regulate life-cycle events. However, here I am implying a gender stress. Similar themes occur in the main festivals to be examined shortly - Hachmo carrying a female bias; Hutani being symbolic of weddings, fertility and significant to both sexes; and Divari carrying male emphases - the death of the year, the cutting off of an old life, the cyclical existence of the patrilineage. Festivals are therefore in a parallel and similar idiom to the life-cycle events, as will become

apparent.

There was only one death within the village while I was there, that of a baby. She was buried, and a bha'o was held for her. The baby had been ill since birth, refusing to gain weight, and it was not a surprise to anyone when she died. There was a sudden wailing and crying from the house and everyone gathered there. The pate was chanting soothing words to everyone and calling out Ishvar's name. This was in order that it would be the last sound that the baby's soul would hear and it would therefore go to join the Supreme Deity. The bhagat's wife took the baby from her mother and told the latter to "hush". The bhagat read aloud some passages from the shastras (scriptures).

The women sat in the uthak; the men outside on a mat, quietly smoking cigarettes. As new women arrived, the wailing began again. Each batch of wailing lasted approximately a quarter of an hour. Closest kin continued longest and needed to be comforted by being touched by others present. Sometimes, a running conversation was incorporated in the wailing. Generally, the weeping was heavily ritualised amongst the women. Those finding it difficult to cry, simply said later that they just had to recall a death in their own family to start them off properly. Male grief was not ritualised. Tears flowed quietly, especially from father and brothers. The father came inside for the main ritualised wailing, but then he joined the men outside again.

The baby's father's younger brother's wife, filled a metal bowl with water and fetched soap and a razor blade. She cut the black band from around the baby's neck - formerly protecting her from the "evil eye". Then she washed her, accompanied by the mother and mother's brother's wife. The mother put oil on the baby and mascara round her eyes. She shut the little mouth. The baby's old dress was put on again and then she was wrapped in a new cloth. She was taken away in her father's arms. (If the body had been bigger, it would have been carried on a bed.) She was of the Akiyani zach. There is a graveyard for this zach outside the village and so she was taken there,

wrapped in her father's shawl. All the village men and boys followed.

Outside the village, the men took control. The grave had been dug; the body was placed inside after being circled above it four times anti-clockwise; a strip of the wrapping cloth was torn off, and put at her feet; a match was struck, symbolic of burning the corpse; and the father tossed in coins before starting to wall up the shelf. Everyone then gathered round and the bhagat let out two shouts ending in "om", at which everybody pushed in a handful of dirt. The grave was then filled in. The father and his eldest son followed last back to the village. They stopped at the canal and washed their hands, faces and feet of the grave's dirt. The diggers and the close kinsmen bathed. A man sprinkled water from a brass pot to purify the others before they entered the village.

Meanwhile, those women who had touched the baby but who were not of its actual household had left the village for the canal. The women washed their hands and were anointed with oil by the father's younger brother's wife. No-one in the village was permitted to eat anything or to drink milky tea until after the funeral feast had been given. In this case, it was fairly quickly in the evening as things are conducted on a small scale for babies and children.

The area outside the house was purified with water. Bajan (devotional songs) were sung by the bhagat. A few mint sweets were burnt by the latter afterwards as an offering to Ishvar. The remainder, donated by the father, were distributed amongst those present. Men sat on a mat outside near the bhagat. Women sat inside the uthak with the mother.

Periodically, other visitors would arrive in the village during the next few weeks to comiserate with the bereaved family. The women, for example affines from another village, would greet, wail and sit with the mother. The men would greet, sit and talk with the father.

The burial of an Akiyani from another village also took place during the fieldwork period and was rather more elaborate, the dead person being adult and male. The corpse was brought on a bed and was again laid by the grave with head facing north. Around it sat several women, wailing and sobbing, while the men sat in a silent group, occasionally urging them to stop. Eventually, one of the zach men rose, saying - "Enough, let us proceed". The women were moved to one side, while the men brought the bed forward. The corpse was elaborately dressed in white, with garlands and many prestigious and symbolic items placed around it - for example, coconut, sugar and incense. A fire had been lit to the north of the grave, and on it were offered part of the sweet items. The rest were tossed about the graveyard, on to the graves, and into the bushes.

Three veiled women approached the bed. They each bowed at the foot of the bed and then went to the head. The covers were by now pulled back and they broke into loud wails of grief, carressing and pressing on the corpse's head. Their wails were tuneful and they contained various sets of words; for example from his sister - "We used to be inseparable playmates together."

The men muttered platitudes and pleas of "enough", and the women eventually left and went to join the others seated at the south-east of the grave. There was silence, until another group of sisters arrived and the process was repeated. Finally, five or six of the village girls came and wailed briefly.

Again the men moved in and took control of the actual burial - it being the same in format as that of the baby girl. Afterwards, the bhagat lit incense sticks, and walked slowly round the grave in an anti-clockwise direction. Finishing, he put them into the ground at the corpse's head. The garlands were then placed around the sticks and talc was sprinkled. The brass bowl, empty of the shiro (sweet, made with butter, sugar, flour and water), was broken with someone's spade.

The women left. The men surrounded the mound and talked philosophically. The deceased's fellow villagers took the bed and the quilts and walked home, not having eaten since the death. The "home" villagers walked back in, stopping to wash faces and feet at the canal. With no ceremony, they each then returned to their own homes.

A bha'o or kharas, dependent on the wishes and wealth of the family, is held in the deceased's village ten to thirteen days after the death. At a kharas guests give money and the hosts are generally poorer; a bha'o is given free for dharam. Most say that it should be twelve days for a woman, and thirteen for a man. These days there are two forms of ceremony - the more traditional moriva pat, which is slowly being phased out; or the more literate-style Gita pat, reflecting the changing emphases in Kutchi thought. I only had the opportunity to witness one of the latter type.

Many men travel to a kharas. Fewer women go, unless close kin. This is bound up with women's lesser travel in general and the fact that this external event is chiefly for men - in terms of the evening's singing by the bhagat, where they teach and generate dharam. This lasts all through the night. The male kin of the deceased cook for the feast.

After tea the following morning, the Gita pat ceremony is held in the deceased's family uthak, with a literate bhagat presiding. As this was a new - style ceremony, the bhagat was concerned to ensure that everything was done "by the book"; everyone was slightly nervous and unsure, but keen to be "correct". Around a central square hole was some red script; brass pots full of water and a little milk were placed at each corner; the pots were then tied together with white thread. Incense sticks were also placed at the corners.

The sons of the deceased were given white sashes to wear, and red tilli marks on their foreheads by the bhagat. The latter then lit a fire of wood and ghi in the hole. The sons, sitting cross-legged on mats

beside it, were instructed to place some brown substance (a mixture of ten ingredients) on to the fire with their right hands, while chanting the same word formula as the bhagat. They had to give a coin before making this offering. The procedure was repeated five times.

After the brothers, some more young men and boys were brought forward for the same routine. Next, the widow was lead out of the house with her black and red veil low. She was wearing a red blouse and had been in semi-seclusion in the house, apart from the periodic wailing with visiting women. She was seated on the mat opposite the bhagat. Three more close female kin joined her and the procedure was again undertaken, then with more women, then more. In fact many more women than men came forward. Also girls gave their coin and had their turn.

Afterwards, the sons were called back and shiro was put on the fire five times. The rest of the ghi was also burnt on it and the remains of the brown mixture. The threads were broken around the pots and at a command all the sons emptied the contents on the fire amid chanting. The ceremony finished, the bhagat told them to take away the wood and charred remains and bury them, and to plaster over the hole and the writing.

2) FESTIVALS

a) HACHMO

The Hachmo festival occurs in the middle of the wet season, and its purported purpose is to appease Sitla, the smallpox goddess. As can be seen from the rites however, there is a parallel idiom to those performed at birth for the purposes of purification. Hachmo is similarly enacted predominantly by the women.

Another Hindu group in Sind apparently undergo many more rites at Hachmo, according to one Kutchi man who had lived near them in the city a long time ago. The Parkari Koli say that Hachmo is the celebration of the birth of Karzi (or Kirshan Bhagvan). This may well have been a former interpretation of the Kutchi also, which has been transformed for a more pressing, "rational" reason; hence the birth observances which linger on in the rites.

It is recognised as purely women's province by the men, for example:

It is only the women who go out to bathe.

At Hachmo we eat sweet things. All the cooking must be done the day beforehand. Then, on the day itself, we eat everything cold. On that day, the house is freshly plastered, and we all bathe and wash our clothes - at least that is the women's concern, we men are only concerned with the eating. But you cannot light a fire in the house. If you wish to make tea, you must make it on an outside hearth. On the third day, you can use it again.

You have to cook away from the house at Hachmo, if you are going to cook at all.

There is an obvious similarity of the above with the birth rites described in chapter three.

The Hachmo which occurred when I was in the village, was celebrated on the twenty-first of August. The day before, the patel yelled around the village that he would take the men into town on his tractor's trailer to collect their Hachmo.

Bhalu patel does this every year. If there is anyone who cannot afford their Hachmo supplies, he is willing to lend/give them the money they need.

Young married women return to their natal village for Hachmo. At Hutani, as will be seen, they must be in the husband's village. This again reveals an equation of Hachmo with birth and Hutani with marriage.

The day beforehand, the women wash their clothes, so that they can wear clean ones for Hachmo itself. They make pukka food, cooked in ghi and sugar to eat during Hachmo - ~~mo~~ (a biscuit-type delicacy made of sugar, flour and ghi), sweet chapatti, and pekora (potatoes and peppers in batter). These again tie in with the strengthening food fed to the mother for a few days after the birth. They are also, however, associated with offerings to the goddess and the richness of festivities.

On the morning of Hachmo itself, the women plaster their houses, especially round the hearth. (They also do this for Hutani and Divari.) Then, one of the women in the village, the daughter of the old patel and well known for her extensive traditional knowledge, came round the houses and called all the women to come out and bathe. They went to the entrance canal to the left of the village gate. They each carried a piece of clay pot with a white cloth placed over it - "like over a ladi (bride)", which they referred to as the Sitla. They started washing their hair. Many sat in the water, fully clothed to do it, comb it out, and later bathe.

As the women came out, some tossed a few sweet chapatti into the water for the dogs to go after. Others insisted upon throwing them on to the banks for the dogs. The associated dharam was reputed to be great for serving such lowly creatures. The woman who led the party said a few words to the goddess as she dropped her chapatti. The bhagat's wife, wanting to show the other women how the rite should be done, launched herself into the water, fully clad, announcing that this was the way to bathe. She swam into the deeper part for a few yards. Then she worshipped, bowing her head to the water with her hands clasped, saying - "Ram, Ram," in a Bhagat-style voice. She next actually swam after the chapatti to throw them out of the water for the dogs.

It was a cloudy day, the water was cold, and the women looked frozen. The children present were bathed if they were willing. Some of the women scarcely went into the water. Some wore their veils

tied round the lower part of their anatomy, others old skirts. They were obviously enjoying the occasion and some were washing each other's backs.

The bhagat's wife sat on the bank for a while after her "swim", in a bhagat- style pose. Afterwards she "bathed Sitla". She washed her own brass pot, and filled it with water. Then, she wrapped the white cloth around the piece of clay pot and put it in the water-filled pot, saying - "Today Sitla, you are given new clothes." Then she did the same for some of the other women's effigies, although most did their own. Some women changed into clean dry clothes on the bank. Then, it was "Come on everyone," and we proceeded back to the village, each to respective households. I accompanied the bhagat's wife. On the way, a young wife asked the latter where to put Sitla. She was shown where, and was told that it had to be on a newly plastered wall.

At the bhagat's house, his wife put Sitla on the wall, with "her" back against a pillar. Next to her was placed a plate of rice and yoghurt, a plate of mathar and some sweet chapatti. She took the brass pot of water and tossed the contents to the sides and into the house. Then she prayed to Sitla and gave bha'o from the offerings present to those gathered around. Additional pukka food was also produced for this. Only then did she feel able to change out of her yards and yards of dripping wet clothes. Food was also distributed to the dogs.

The women subsequently gave out brass dishes containing sweet chapatti, and pieces of blouse cloth to their kinswomen throughout the village. Young female messengers from the household kept returning with empty brass dishes to be refilled.

(What will happen to Sitla now?)

We will take her out. Place her in the water. Throw grain over her, and crack our knuckles against our heads.

(Today?)

"No, not today. It has to be an auspicious day".

(Tomorrow?) She looked doubtful and resorted to her husband for help.

Bhagat - "No, the day after the day after tomorrow you will do it. Monday is auspicious."

(Note in the above how men may provide the external reference points - time, dates, directions - for female rituals; yet they do not know the internal intricacies of the rites.)

I was unfortunately unable to witness the last-mentioned rite, but enjoyed an interesting conversation about it beforehand, and about the earlier rite.

All the women go to bathe. Girls do not go, only young children. Widows only go one to two years after their husband's death. It is for the children, you see. Once the children have eaten the kular (flour, sugar and ghi) and bha'o one or two years, then if the Mata (smallpox goddess) comes it will not be severe. On the next good day, Monday, in the evening, the women will take the Sitla out to the water. The water is river water, meant to be. There they will take dung and form a ring. Inside they will place wheat grains and on them the Sitla. Then they will throw grain, and crack their knuckles, and that will be the end of Hachmo for this year.

In the above description of Hachmo, we can see to what extent it is women's province. The internal and the external have been contrasted and this corresponds with the fact that Hachmo is an internal, domestic rite, responsible for keeping the household pure from contamination by smallpox. Women therefore define it as their responsibility and so do men.

The rites can be seen as similar in many respects to those undertaken at birth and at marriage. There is thus an inter-relationship between life-cycles and Kutchi festivals, with both playing a fundamental part in the perceived maintenance of social order. Not only are the symbols used more or less identical to those representing birth but the latter is again equated with femaleness, ethnic purity and corporate body purity.

b) HUTANI

Hutani took place in March at the beginning of the hot season. I observed two Hutani ceremonies whilst living in the village. Hutani is the Kutchi equivalent of the Indian Holi festival. In the village, it symbolised fertility and marriage.

Previous to the event, little girls made dung-cakes behind the houses. These were made in different shapes and had finger-holes through them, so that they could be roped together for the ceremony. This is specifically a female task, as is anything with dung association. It is reputedly good for dharam, and a cause of excitement for the girls.

Most of the village attended the ceremonies with the exception of widows and pregnant women. Young, newly married pregnant women are not permitted to circle the fires, as this would apparently involve the marriage of a son to his mother, and a daughter to her father. In addition, women are only permitted to circle the fires twelve times in their lives - four at their weddings, four at Hutani, and four at their deaths. (There is no limit to a man's circling).

Older pregnant women, who would not be circling anyway, are supposed not to attend the ceremony for fear of damaging the foetus. (As in the case of an eclipse, where a foetus is reputed to become blind if its mother looks directly at the sun.)

A similarity to Holi was where the animals had their horns and tails applied with dye to give them a reputedly more cheerful appearance. Also possible apparently, (although it did not take place when we were there), is the practice of young men trying to catch their bhabbi (elder brother's wife), to put black colour on her face.

Similar to weddings, green is the preferable colour for women at Hutani; for the brides going round the fire; and for the babies bowing before the fires for the first time.

The ceremonies took place in the evening, under a full-moon. Outside the village entrance, to the left, in the nearest field to the canal, were built three large bonfires of dung-cakes - chiefly made by the village boys, with a few older men in supervisory capacity. The children were all very excited and playing in an atmosphere of festivity. They do not usually go outside the village gate after dark.

Sometime after and gradually, more and more village men wandered out. A stick was placed in the centre of each bonfire with a white flag on top. The fires were lit. As the sticks burned and fell, there was great excitement from the onlookers. Whichever way they point when they fall, the land to that side is supposed to be especially fertile in the coming year.

Starting with the most influential village men, they threw a dried date into each fire and worshipped it, with hands as in prayer and heads bowed. (It is referred to as puglagav.) After the men had all done this, some village girls did the same, this time giggling nervously.

Then, from all the households, young men or girls came running out of the village, each clasping a large bundle of bright green animal fodder under the right arm. They ran round all three fires in an anti-clockwise direction, trying to burn the tips of the bundles in the fire. This was to symbolise crop and animal prosperity and fertility. They were not supposed to look behind them for fear of seeing a djinn (as at the wedding encirclement). However, others still tried to tease them into doing so. They finished at the end of the bonfires nearest to the village.

Some singing women processed out of the village, bearing babies, brass pots with coconut, and trays or dishes of popcorn. They sat near the canal on the north-west side of the fires. Some first threw their dates and performed puglagav to the fires.

Another singing group of women from the groom's household heralded the arrival of the wedding couple. It obviously depends upon

the year, how many grooms the village will have. Both years I was there, however, there was just one. The couple wore their new wedding clothes, and were roped together as at the wedding encirclement rite. The bride was totally veiled in a green Kutchi-type tie-dyed headcloth. She carried a large clay water-pot with a lighted divo (ghi wick) in it, under her left arm. (The women say that if this is extinguished, the bride will be carried off by a Meghvar (man of low, leather-working caste). The groom carried a coconut and a brass pot of water, sprinkling water on the fires as they undertook their four circles. Afterwards, he was ritually greeted by his mother (vadav). She took some ash from the fire and put a tili (mark) on his head and then tossed popcorn over him. He threw the coconut into the fire.

Next, all the baby boys, lado (bridegrooms) born in the last year, were each carried round the fires once by a male kinsman, usually the father. The baby was held in the right arm. A brass pot of water, topped by a coconut, was in the left hand. On completion of the circling, the coconut was placed temporarily at the foot of the southern-most fire, as was the water. The baby boy was similarly greeted (vadav) by his mother, with the ash mark on his head. He wore a green shirt and a green cloth over his head, as at his naming ceremony.

Newborn baby girls were brought by their mothers to this fire, where they also had ash placed on their foreheads and were greeted by their mothers with popcorn and the vadav rite. Not for them the trip around the fires however.

Many small contingents of village women came singing out of the village, accompanying brides to be married in the next cold season. These girls carried winnowers of offerings for the fires.

After ensuring that everyone present had worshipped the fire, they all seated themselves. Women were as usual to the side nearest the village. Popcorn and coconut as bha'o were distributed amongst the assembled crowd by the male ritual specialists. People who rarely saw

each other had the opportunity to talk whilst the fires burned down. The women then melted off home, and so did many of the older men. The bonfires were raked flat so that the burning coals joined each other and formed a path. In both years a young man was encouraged to run over these coals barefoot, as a sign that Ishvar would look after him in the coming year.

Throughout Hutani, there can be seen to be an emphasis upon fertility. Dates and coconut are also strongly associated with weddings. In Hindu thought, coconut symbolises testicles and male fertility. The contribution of both sexes to the ritual action symbolises their complementary and opposing parts in the social realm. Thus, Hutani can be seen to resemble a wedding, with the necessity of its respective contributions from both sexes. Again, the women represent the internal, domestic, village realm. The men organise the externals and the enactment of these "by the book". Four times round the fire signifies a rite of passage. Once round the fire signifies fertility, prosperity, and a healthy year ahead.

c) No'NORTH

At the beginning of the cold season, twenty-one days before Divari, falls No' Northa. Nine days before No'Northa, which translated means "the nine nights", girls and young village women start singing the garbi songs. A clay-pot with holes in it, called the garbi, contains a divo (a ghi wick). The effect strongly resembles the Hallowe'en turnip lantern.

A small group of singing women from the principle zach of the village start out with it and visit each household, acquiring assistants from the young girl residents as they progress. The songs are sung to the young women of the house, actually using their names. They are slightly teasing in nature, but generally they voice the nearest appropriate wish of the woman; - for example her forthcoming marriage or a future son's birth.

"Shasti, give our brother Pansa a son."

"Ganga, who will be married very soon."

The songs are said to be for the ears of the temple Mata (goddess), and again they are specifically women's province - by women, for women. They finish at the Mata's village shrine or temple, where they sing four songs. As at each wedding stage and at the naming ceremony, four is the appropriate ritual number. The songs are sung each night until No'Northa itself. On that night, they will be given five rupees by each village household to buy sweets, which will then be distributed as bha'o amongst the houses before Divari.

I observed No'Northa itself in a neighbouring village, where there is a zach temple for the Mayani and an expert resident bhopa. (The host village, has only shrines, not a temple; and the bhopa is fairly inactive in a village of many bhagat.) When I arrived towards evening, several Mayani guests were already there for the temple ceremony. Women were returning from the village shop, bearing dhal and porridge for the sacrifice and complaining about how much it had all cost.

At sunset, the bhopa made sacrifices inside the temple to the goddesses, Savan and Shikothar. These are complementary, as in most shrines and temples; one goddess being vegetarian and the other not; or one liking sweet things and the other disliking them. The temple itself was colourfully decorated, with lamps burning. (Becoming a bhopa for a male is hereditary. There are some female bhopi - some by virtue of their own hereditary powers, others simply through marriage.)

Girls of the zach began to bring plates of mug-dhal, ghi and chapatti. They were scolded by the bhopa for not bringing them all at once and remembering their own household's contribution. Coals and water were requested, and brought to the bhopa by his eldest son.

Menstruating women, those who have given birth, and women not of the zach, are never allowed inside the temple. Thus, the offerings were brought by zach girls, boys and men. The food is cooked by the wives of the Mayani but is "given" by the men.

The bhopa burnt small amounts of sweet porridge, dhal, chapatti and ghi, which had first been mixed in a brass bowl, on the coals. Three portions from each contribution were put back on the trays and given to the clan girls to take home. Chapatti were mounting in a pile to feed the animals later for dharam. The remaining elements accumulated on another large dish. The bhopa sprinkled water in purification, and then the contents of the afore-mentioned dish were fed to the assembled men.

The zach girls gathered outside the temple to sing the last of the garbi songs, helped by the bhopa's wife. The men relaxed, chatting and drinking tea.

The following morning, the bhopa made another offering in the temple, consisting of sweet porridge and ghi. This was not however a collective rite, until afterwards, when the Mayani men were called back to the temple to kneel, bow to the goddesses and chant their devotion.

d) DIVARI AND PARWA

Divari falls twenty-one days after No'Northa, generally towards the end of October. These festivals are more than the others associated with masculinity - the patrilineage; the male ritual specialists; the sacrificed male goat at Parwa on the day after Divari with the first cutting of the boy's hairlock; the emphasis on the calendar, time, and external markings. In this way, these rituals equate more with the male regulation of death - the death of the old year; the cutting off of the past incarnation; and the emphasis upon the perpetuation of the lineage group.

At dusk the day before Divari, the shrine or temple specialist sacrifices tul (seeds) to the Mata for the Karasoudis rite. In the morning, the women plaster the houses, especially the hearths, making them fresh for the New Year and as at all festivals people bathe, wash

their clothes, and buy special treats. Food containing more sugar and fat is cooked by the women, for example sweet noodles and rice. Men disappear to town and reappear bearing gifts.

At nightfall, candles are lit in all the houses and uthak and the whole village resembles a twinkling fairyland. The children run about excitedly, twirling sparklers, their new clothes gleaming and shining in the coloured lights. Those men who are prone to drinking alcohol assemble to drink a great deal. For the rest, it is a quiet, but special, domestic evening.

The following morning is Parwa and the women make offerings in their homes; divo lamps, with wheat, sugar and ghi on winnowers. Quite early, everyone visits everyone else in the village, greeting them. This is very similar to the Scottish New Year custom. Past grievances and grudges are reputedly forgotten. It is a time of supreme happiness, and supreme sadness as people cry in remembrance of former Divari and the deaths that have since occurred; or they bewail the "better" rituals and festivals they had in former times. In the host village, at this stage of the proceedings, a form of ancestor worship was conducted for the old patel, who had been highly venerated and from whom many of the rest of the village were descended. Rice and coconut offerings were made and, afterwards, everyone was invited to the home of the current patel for a cup of tea.

At this time too offerings are made of a baby son's first hairlock at the zach shrine or temple; to cut off the sins of his past life and to dedicate his present life to the goddess. This must take place at Parwa or be postponed until the following year.

The fields around the village are deserted for the two days of festivities - no people, no animals - apart from the necessary acquisition of animal fodder. The oxen especially are given a rest, and they are decorated with flowers and garlands.

As at No'Northa, zach members congregate at the appropriate temple at Divari and Parwa. There, they ask the bhopa to make offerings for them; and so do the women. In the evening, the men cook rice for the feast in the space in front of the temple or shrine. The savoury rice and shiro are served to the women and children first, as is usual at such times.

At the time of the hairlock offering there is also a sacrifice of goats for Parwa; enough have to be killed to feed the whole village and its guests. In the ritual observed, this involved two goats. The bhopa and his assistants try to persuade the goats to present themselves to the goddesses, by appearing at the door of the temple, of their own volition. This is, of course, difficult and can take much of the morning. In this case, the practitioners finally decided that it was sufficient that the goats had viewed the inside of the temple.

There was great reluctance to be the person to slit their throats; the pap (sin) of taking life is enormous and has to be shared by the community in the joint eating of the flesh. Once completed however, the blood was drained into a kneading bowl and some into a cup for the sacrifice. The men tried to keep the women and children away from the whole proceedings, but the latter were intrigued by the squeaking, dying goats and gathered to watch.

Again there was reluctance as to who would skin and dissect them. Three men were eventually persuaded. The goats were tied on to a pole by their forelegs to be skinned. Then they were cut. The muscles (white), and the kidney (black), and the heart (red), were sacrificed to the goddess. The zach men gathered in front of the temple to eat the goat's entrails and to drink home-brewed rum. (See also Mayer,A. 1960)

The women were meanwhile fed a meal of rice containing some goat's meat. Their drinking completed, the men ate of this too.

These latter festivals, therefore emphasise maleness; the corporate identity of the zach, and the importance of the patrilineal principle to Kutchi society. They are also to some extent external to the village, in that the men often have to travel to their own temple to dedicate the hairlock or to make offerings. They are external to home and hamlet, and therefore outwith the responsibility and remit of the women, at least in terms of degree and comparison.

CONCLUSION.

In these descriptions of death as a life-cycle ritual and of the Kutchi festivals, certain similar themes and parallels can be discerned. This applies also to the birth and wedding rituals described in chapter three. The continuity and integral elements are expressed throughout the range of Kutchi ritual symbols and experiences and the mode is often repetitive.

There is an equation of women with the inside, the house, the enclosure, the village, the nearest field to the village. Women are concerned with inner ritual, the protection of the hearth and home. Wherever the men are at any given juncture, the women will be closer to the home; even where this is simply a question of degree, as in the Hutani example of the closest part of the field to the village.

Women have a closer identification with birth and Hachmo, which are internal rituals, concerned with the purity of the person, the household, children (the province of the female group par excellence), and the small corporate social group.

Both sexes join together actually and symbolically in the celebration of weddings and Hutani. Both are defined as necessary in terms of alliance, fertility, prosperity, performing their complementary roles in the home and in the fields. The joint responsibility for ritual still involves the equation of women with grouping, solidarity, and internal

mechanisms; men with exchange, mediating, travel and external structures.

Similarly, death, No'Northa, Divari and Parwa, are predominantly male realms; involving structure rather than sentiment; travelling outside the village; a symbolic equation with the structured and cyclically conceived nature of reincarnation which transgresses the boundaries of time; external identities; and the life-span of the patrilineage.

This part also illustrates the integral and essential contribution made by Kutchi females in the ritual sphere. To observers looking for a structure and explicit meanings, their role may not seem as important as that of the men. As was stated in the preceding part, their role is often embedded and implicit. The meanings that they present for their own actions are implicit and contextual, and thus more difficult for those working within external structured categories to perceive. They are nevertheless there to be observed and "felt", and I am sure that my detailed account of some of the rites makes their existence and depth readily apparent.

As will be seen in the last ethnographic chapter, women as a sex are the ones most concerned to retain these ritual traditions as they are at present, or even as they were. They are opposed to men in terms of the social change that is taking place.

PART THREE: WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

Introduction.

1) Limitations.

2) Affairs.

3) Subtle Transgressions.

4) Sexual Intercourse.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

This part will present something of a contrast to the one preceding. In it, we will explore the nature of sexuality amongst the female Kutchi, with specific reference to the resources they feel to be at their disposal and their associated use of these resources.

As I mentioned earlier, the Kutchi are not unlike other groups in Pakistan and India which regard the purity of their women as being of extreme importance. This purity, virginity in an unmarried woman, or chastity in a married one, is guarded vigilantly by everyone in the group. A small-scale environment is conducive to the possession of knowledge as to everyone's whereabouts. The onus falls chiefly upon the family for its own members, but the hamlet members and indeed all villagers are in some way felt responsible and will always distribute valuable information.

1) LIMITATIONS

Examples of the limitations upon female sexuality were many.

A distant villager reported to the father of one young man that the latter's wife had been seen going to the fields alone. The family therefore felt justified in taking action against the girl because of her improper behaviour and she was beaten by her husband. In another case, one man and his wife were temporarily separated because of a family argument. The former's family were however able to relax in the knowledge that she was living with another family and always went to the fields with its women.

Increasingly, as I myself became accepted by the Kutchi and adopted into the daughter-in-law role, I found my own movements circumscribed. No longer could I stray too far away from the Kutchi in the fields or on the path. When Sindi came to clear the manure from behind the houses, my "mother-in-law" was perpetually appearing at the back of the dwellings to ensure that I was not spending an unnecessary amount of time with the washing and frequently urging me to "hurry up".

Although I found these instances rather annoying or amusing at first, I later became aware of the certain security and reassurance which they gave to the women and also to me. On account of the close watch maintained however, I began to wonder how they could ever manage to have affairs. These do occasionally occur and perhaps illustrate that with inborn knowledge of societal ideals, actual practitioners can always find alternative means.

Social behaviour and boundaries aim at restraint and ensure that contact between the sexes is minimal. A couple who are not married to each other and of "dangerous" age must not be seen together. A man must not enter a woman's house, unless her husband or a close relative is there. This manner of behaviour is so much a part of the taken-for-granted-world, that if it is in any way transgressed automatic assumptions are made as to the sins of the deviants.

Rani and Ratani were two Kutchi women who frequently took risks with sexual boundaries. Both had reputations because of previous affairs and flirtations and both were considered attractive in popular Kutchi conceptions. Their husbands knew that they had to watch them and were frequently suspicious. Thus, when, by accident, I met Rani walking through fields at the farthest boundary of the village with another man, the very fact that it was "forbidden" for them to be there, or together, made conclusions as to their intent fairly obvious. (As were their guilty looks.)

Sitting with Ratani in her house, at a time of day when she would generally either have been alone or out in the fields with everyone else, it was a surprise when Naru, her husband's classificatory brother's son, entered as if he were accustomed to doing so. He was very shocked suddenly to see me and they both appeared extremely guilty. He retreated and Ratani was very nervous afterwards. Some months later, my suspicions as to their relationship were confirmed, when I was again enjoying hospitality at Buro and Ratani's home. Buro was obviously angry with his wife. He took every opportunity to be rude to her and about her and to talk loudly and shamingly to everyone present about unfaithful and untrustworthy wives. He had apparently recently brought her back from another village, where she had stayed for a few days after a kharas. Something had obviously been drawn to his attention there to make him so displeased with his wife. It was a day later that I discovered that Naru and his family had recently moved from their village to the one that had been holding the kharas.

Yet although Buro obviously knew or suspected of her infidelity, and although he had previously discovered an affair of hers and had beaten her for it, little was done in this case.

Thus, despite the fact that the Kutchi loudly condemn immoral behaviour, discuss what should be done to offenders, and take stringent steps to prevent it happening in the first place; these remain very much the ideals. In reality, the punishment and social

disapproval are somewhat less than one would expect. Privately, the inevitability of such occurrences is discussed fatalistically and sometimes even with humour after some time has elapsed.

For example, many years before, when Buro's mother had been a young widow, she was having an affair with the patel's brother. It was finally made public when he was discovered climbing into her elevated bed one night. Years later, a group of people, including the man's son and his then, and present, wife, could sit and joke about the affair and its discovery.

In fact, wives whose husbands have remained with them do not openly reflect displeasure or any type of emotion about their husband's old affairs, even if they resulted in pregnancy or the family having to leave the village because of the disgrace.

2) AFFAIRS

Despite my examples of Rani and Ratani, women will generally experience much more shame if an affair is discovered. The reputation will adhere to them and they will be disgraced and perhaps later pitied. Buro's mother still bore the stigma twenty-five years later, and her son did not respect her because of it. For an unmarried girl, the stigma is very much worse and will affect her marriage prospects at the very least.

This double-standard of condoning male behaviour and judging the female is typical throughout the literature of the sub-continent and is prevalent in many other societies also. Society sets its boundaries and morality by social taboos and restraints such as veiling and rules of contact. (Many of these will be explored in the following part.) Beyond these, however, the onus is generally upon the woman to behave herself or beware the consequences. This was recognised and voiced by the women themselves:

If a woman behaves like that, people will say things. If a husband does, no-one will say anything to him. Perhaps his

father is able to do something, but only he.

The inevitability of the sex act, if opposites happen to meet and interact, is a popular male belief, well-documented in the literature. (See Mintjes 1983) Kutchi men also tended to believe this, saying that "sex is woman's pleasure", and making an automatic correlation. Women did not, however, see it as inevitable, perhaps realising that there were many of their number who had never "indulged" in an illicit sexual relationship and that some were more prone to "deviance" than others. Those women who did so, were defined by other women as weak and lacking appropriate female moral fibre; bad, in that they refused to maintain control of themselves. They were believed to have demonstrated a choice and that it was perfectly possible for all women to exercise their own intrinsic strength in such matters. This is in contrast to male views which judge such things to happen because of woman's innate weakness and inability to restrain herself.

Women rather think of men in these terms, being too weak to help themselves, as it is intrinsic to their natures. Thus, actual blame for affairs was attributed by the women to the woman.

It happens lots here. There are many bad, sinful young women about. The husband is away working, the woman finds another man.

People who do that are like birds. They have sex twenty times during the day, and twenty times at night - always with different partners. They hop from nest to nest.

Women who go after other men? The husband can dissolve the marriage, and send her back. He can get rid of her. Otherwise, if everyone knows, and there is public shame, the patel might tell them both to go.

If both are married, and nobody knows, it just carries on. Even if there is a baby, if no-one knows, what can they do? If her husband or others find out though, she will be beaten up by her husband. So much so that she will probably shit herself, and then be sent back to her family without her kids.

Yet, if extra-marital affairs are disapproved amongst the Kutchi, pre-marital are even more. From their responses and attitudes, it

would seem that purity is not the issue here but marriage. Affairs after marriage may be an insult to the husband's honour and bring shame to the whole group concerned, but in many ways pragmatically they can be ignored, if not forgotten. Something that threatens the possibility of marriage is, however, a deep sin. The suitable marriages of any daughters they may produce are a perpetual worry for Kutchi families. The idea of an unmarriageable girl on their hands is a perceptual catastrophe.

Neither sex in Kutchi society can conceive of a person not marrying. Marriage is the main step towards social completeness. Whereas an unmarried boy's sexual behaviour may be regarded with tolerance and simple admonishment, a post-pubescent girl's virginity must be jealously guarded. She is watched, accompanied and assessed until she is finally settled in her husband's village and distanced from parental jurisdiction and responsibility.

However, even in this more risky area, liaisons can and do occur. The marriage between Rani and Dingo was called off by the groom's family because it had been reported from someone in Rani's village that she had been behaving in an unacceptable manner with Nilo. Perhaps the groom's side were not hesitant in taking this serious step because they had located someone "preferable" for the boy to marry. I must stress that the breaking of an engagement happens rarely however and it would not have been possible without the rumour of Rani's misconduct. Whether anything actually took place, or whether it was all gossip and hearsay, only the couple themselves could probably say and they respectably remain mute on the subject. Certainly, Rani did not become pregnant.

This was therefore a different case from that of Shamu and Jama. Jama was an unmarried daughter of Viro's. Shamu was married to Chali and they had a baby girl. Shamu was a young Christian evangelist and although he had no kin in the village, he was supported and trusted by Arjan, Viro, Ramshi, and other men in the Christian hamlet. In fact, he was treated as a brother and had so succeeded in breaking down

barriers that he was permitted to accompany Viro's daughters, as if he was father's brother. Suddenly, without warning, he left the village with his family and a few valuables, saying that he was needed elsewhere and that he would later return for his goat and the rest of his possessions. He did not return. Meanwhile it was discovered that Chali was pregnant. She was badly beaten by her father and if the latter or his kinsmen could have found Shamu, the same, or probably worse, would have happened to him.

In the case of a married man having an affair with an unmarried girl, the blame appears to rest more with the man. The double-standard is not so evidently operative where a virgin and her family's honour and reputation are at stake. More importantly, her marriage prospects may be in jeopardy. The fact that she is still in her natal home, with all her kin around her, may also play a vital part. She is their responsibility and the male culprit has directly broken their trust and their concept of honour and decency. It is seen as an attack on the group itself and is perceived very differently from a liaison with a daughter-in-law, who is not "of them" and can therefore be blamed for her upbringing and "bad" character.

Lakshman recounted what had happened to Chali in the above case.

She was taken to Hyderabad by Arjan when she was seven months pregnant and the baby boy was aborted for six hundred rupees. They had tried to get the local midwife to do it, but she had said that she could not do something like that. They always have to do this in such cases, because what else can you do? If there is a husband, then it is all right. But if she is not married, you would never be able to marry her, because no man would agree to take such a woman. She had not even had her habkan (engagement rite) performed. After the deed, the family went ahead with that and only people in this hamlet and the rest of the village and one or two other villages know anything about it.

During the fieldwork period, Chali was living in another village with her husband and baby and was pregnant again. She came periodically to visit her family and on the surface everyone seemed to have forgotten about the past, except for Shamu's fault in it. Quick-witted and very flirtatious, the incident seems to have done little to change Chali's

attitude to life and men.

When I asked one of the village women more generally about what happens when an unmarried girl becomes pregnant, I received this response:

"It does not happen."

(What never?)

"Oh, well. We marry her quickly. If it is in summer, then that is very difficult. What can you do? If she gets married, and they do not find out, that is fine. If they find out before the marriage, the in-laws will not take her. They say that they will not take a girl like that - I do not blame them. If they find out after the marriage, the husband beats her up. Not the father-in-law. Then he sends her back to her family. He will not keep a woman like that. Her parents will not beat her up. She will either stay at home, or "make a home" with someone else. It is difficult to find someone else to take her if everyone knows about her though. But if not many know, they can change and find her a different fiance from the first one."

Mali did not mention here the possibility of abortion, and it is obviously a last resort, considering the way the Kutchi feel about both children and the taking of any form of life. It would also be a very shameful thing for them to speak about, especially for women who have nothing to do with death in this culture. This is however an illustration of how important honour and marriageability are for them to even consider the abortion option, far less actually choose it.

Mali also stated that the girl's own father would not beat her. This was seen not to be true in Chali's case and judging from usual Kutchi attitudes, I would think the latter to be the norm.

3) SUBTLE TRANSGRESSIONS

Changing the perspective from actual affairs, we can focus upon less risky forms of sexual behaviour. Life in this area is more subtle and blurred at the boundaries. A shared joke, smile, or even exchanged look can imply sexual interest or attraction, especially if done in

secret. There are certain occasions in the fields when flirtations can occur. In the village too, at certain times or in certain spaces, more freedom is possible between the sexes.

At night, by the hand-pump or when walking behind the houses to urinate, rules and restrictions can be ignored if both sides are willing. Darkness helps here, in both providing privacy in a basically public environment and in hiding a rebuff if one is to ensue. Such meetings do not necessarily lead to affairs and most often do not. But through them sexual excitement and interest is generated in a society which emphasises the forbidden nature of such pleasures.

A lesser degree of flirtation may also take place at times of visiting or festivity. This cannot happen immediately, as initially more social formality and segregation than the everyday forms are the norm. However, after a day or two, when everyone is relaxed and enjoying the time together, flirting can occur. Thus, at wedding times, young wives may take advantage of the atmosphere to flirt with young husbands; an older man may flirt with a female visitor he has not seen for a long time; and there is generally increased opportunity for social interaction outwith the usual narrow household boundaries.

As Sharma has stated (1978c), there are many ways of veiling oneself and the subtleties and innuendos of concealment became clearer and clearer to me whilst among the Kutchi. What at first appeared a blank veil of depressing and oppressing proportions later took on a much more ambivalent role, as the women were perceived to have learned to use their veils with sympathy, enticement, and a whole range of nuances of meaning. This is less true for very new wives, but becomes progressively possible after the birth of the first child and the simultaneous apprehension of traditional female "wisdom" in these areas.

Yet all the above discussed behaviour has its restraints, limitations and impossibilities in terms of time, space, or even social feasibility. For example flirtatious Nena finds it possible to put her hand briefly

upon the knee of Lakshman, when there are others, sometimes even her husband, present. This could be viewed as flirting, teasing, or deliberate provocation. On the other hand, she would be very unlikely to do so when there were no guardians of propriety there, unless she wanted to risk going to the length of an affair.

Similarly, Netha frequently flirted with Arjan in the company of others, including his wife. She had to practise avoidance of him, but this did not prevent her from showing him her interest by means of jokes, easy-going manner, teasing, and the periodic letting slip of her veil as if by accident. Yet in some contexts, Netha obviously felt that this type of behaviour was out of place, as she had no intention of having an affair with him, nor he with her. For example, at an evening social gathering in our hut, Arjan was unusually present with his children. (Being a "big man", he used to entertain frequently, but rarely be entertained.) Netha entered, unveiled, as she had no suspicion whatsoever that he would be there. After she was seated, she suddenly noticed him and was visibly overcome with shame and worry. She veiled herself quickly, and spent the rest of the time in quiet embarrassment.

Partly, she would have been concerned in case other women blamed and judged her for her immoral and shocking conduct. However, as I was the only other adult woman present, her main worry was that she had revealed herself too much to Arjan, completely out of context. This was beyond sexual teasing and frivolity; it illustrated total shamelessness in Kutchi female mentality and could easily be interpreted the wrong way by a man. It was sexual matter out of place. Thus, in normal everyday life there are boundaries. In sexual life there are boundaries. Sometimes these cross and intersect. Often they are different. But always they exist.

4) SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

Intercourse for a married couple can take place either at home at night or in the fields during the day. Affairs are generally conducted outside the village.

Within marriage, sexual pleasure is accepted and expected. It is a rare subject for discussion, although in informal situations, it is the occasional topic for fireside mirth. In a very public society, it is practically impossible to keep secret the occasions of marital sexual intercourse. Close family will always know; comment upon any problems; and connive at any enjoyment. If a married couple disappear, coded messages amongst those surrounding will result in their being given peace by any would-be disturbers. Thus, Arjan and Mali would retire frequently into their house in the evenings, in response to exchanged signals between them. The rest of the household would maintain a knowing and talkative guard.

When Rani and Hadhu were first married, they could often be seen chasing each other around the back of the houses, behaving in an overtly sexual and provocative manner. Similarly, when Khanu was newly married, he would secretly meet his wife at the back of the houses when she was bathing.

Sexual intercourse could not take place in this semi-public area, but it appeared to symbolise to the Kutchi a wilder part of the village, where restraints are less and, associatedly, more things are possible. Not as wild and "natural" as the fields and the external environment, it was nevertheless the location of animal's and children's excrement, everyone's urine, women's bath space, and a possible venue for the partial breaking down of sexual boundaries. It was seen as a dirty, untidy and intriguing place.

Although I never actually heard a woman voice the fact that she enjoyed sex, they used to grin secretly and embarrassedly whenever it was mentioned. Generally the prospect of sex with their husbands was

appreciated both for itself and for its procreative potential. Attitudes of fear or revulsion were neither observed nor expressed. When the men were asked if women enjoyed sex their reaction was similar.

Of course they enjoy sex. They would not be normal women if they did not. Sex is their chief pleasure.

To all Kutchi therefore, it seems natural that enjoyment is involved. They all believed, for example, that women might disappear with other men of their own free will and do not necessarily have to be raped or dragged.

A rare female reference to sex occurred when some women were talking about the younger brother marrying the elder brother's wife on the elder brother's death.

It can only occur if elder brother's wife and younger brother's wife are happy with the arrangement. Otherwise, the wives could become angry and accuse the husband of only sleeping with one wife and not the other, and say, "What is the point?".

Apart from a young newly married couple who only possess one bed, husband and wife usually sleep on separate beds, children beside them. Intercourse can apparently take place on either bed, although it is preferred by men for the woman to come to the man's bed, perhaps because of the imputed impurity of her quilt.

Men consider semen and sex as impure and polluting. It is said to be the seed from which children come into being and to be stored in male heads. Men say that when they are hungry there is less, but when they are replete there is more. In male belief sex does not make a man impure, but it does pollute the woman:

After they have slept together, the woman to purify herself must bathe and change her clothes. Just as to clean a dirty dish you must wash it and then the dirt is removed.

Semen is stored in the head. It is impure. The man is not impure after sex, but the woman is. She has to have a bath and change her clothes.

Thus even in male belief, the associated female impurity is temporary

rather than intrinsic. They believe that women are however more prone to impurities than are men.

Women do sometimes have baths after sex, although they do not necessarily change all their clothes, perhaps one garment. In this way, they obviously pay some sort of respect to its reputed polluting nature. On the other hand, they do not regard it as being in the realm of menstruation or childbirth, which they occasionally define as disgusting in terms of "dirt". This disgust appears to coincide with their definitions of dirt and matter out of place and is assumed to be temporary. The belief that therefore emerges is not of the intrinsically impure nature of Kutchi females, at least within women's perception. Any impurities with which they come into contact are "out there", external to themselves and not intrinsically part of their conception of self, which is accordingly not devalued.

In winter for example, although there is more opportunity for sex, with everyone inside and private, because of the cold, the women do not bathe more frequently. Sexual intercourse between a married couple is not defined as impure in female ideology. The definitions of pollution are expressed purely by the male sex.

Young wives indeed appear to love having their "purifying" baths. (See Ridd 1981 for a Moslem example of female pride in a rite which ostensibly emphasises female impurity.) A long time is spent over the baths and they perhaps regard them as a way to escape temporarily from the jurisdiction of the mother-in-law, without the possibility of the latter objecting. Young wives may thus be manipulating ideal male values as to female sexual impurity in order to escape work for a time.

The number of baths decrease the older a woman becomes. Old widows have few, perhaps on account of no partner, but perhaps also because they have less energy to perform many tasks. They also rarely shave their pubic hair. Young wives greatly emphasise this pubic shaving and they associate it with "good", "non-obstructed" sex and with the

minimising of dirt and impurities. Girls shave for the first time at their ritual bath before their wedding.

Baths in addition to being cleansing and purifying can also be a subject of pride. The more that a young wife takes, the more her husband obviously enjoys her. Wives who bathe less will therefore be judged accordingly. Perhaps there is the associated temptation to take "fake" purifying baths in this competitive female society; but I have no actual evidence of this.

It is a common belief, that "If a wife does not fear her husband, she will run away and sleep elsewhere." This maxim is frequently quoted to encourage young husbands to be tougher and stricter on their wives to suit the dominant ideology of appropriateness. Women also voice this concept.

Run-away marriages apparently occur less frequently in these times, especially for a first marriage.

They do not often happen, but sometimes they do. The couple have to go very far away together, and settle in a village there. Women are expensive. If you do not have money, you have to get a woman, and run away with her.

In such cases apparently, the Kutchi have always been able to take the law into their own hands. They may no longer want that specific woman back because she is impure, but it is still necessary to have a replacement for her for present or future exchanges. Thus, the robbed zach is at liberty to take a woman from the man's zach in compensation. This is rare nowadays, but was previously a more frequent occurrence. It is still however cited as the correct response to such a situation.

In general, the more the Kutchi have become settled in permanent villages and have adopted certain Moslem concepts, the less possibility there has been for women to make their own sexual choices. As I will explore more fully in the last section, in the Indian Kutchi village that I visited there was considerably more freedom for the women to go

out in groups or even alone. There was also an increased incidence of separation and fresh partnership. Women there appeared to follow the pattern reported by Sachchidananda (1978) and Carstairs (1957) for tribal women, of "looser" morals, more individual freedom, more egalitarian sexual relationships, and lower external status.

The changing patterns for the Kutchi in Sind show less possibility of pre- and post-marital affairs as the women are increasingly staying within the home and the village environment, and the boundaries within which their lives are led are becoming more rigid with fewer exits.

CONCLUSION

In this part, we have looked at aspects of female sexuality. We have focussed upon the possibility of choice in the social environment, along with the associated restraints. Boundaries and limitations have been discussed and there have been specific examples of social transgressors and societal hypothetical and actual responses to these actions. Male and female attitudes and values have been explored, and towards the end of this part we looked briefly at certain aspects of social change, which will be developed later.

Introduction.

- 1) Space and Status.
- 2) Space and Contact.

Conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

In this part, focus will be upon Kutchi women in terms of their opposition to men. In earlier sections, we have already looked at this to an extent in the realms of thought, work, ritual practice and ascribed identity. In this part, which closes the intermediate section on women within the village, focus will rather be upon spatial categorisation, symbolic practices, and definitions of gender position. The following conclusions will apply both to this part and to the chapter as a whole, where emphasis has throughout been upon differing perceptions of reality between men and women.

Women in Kutchi society are seen, and see themselves in opposition to men in almost every social situation. They are categorised, and categorise themselves, differently in terms of dress, behaviour, space, work and status. Emphasis is placed upon the distinctions, and women are regulated and bounded very closely - by both sexes. A man may frequently be heard to say that, "Women do not do..," or that, "Women do....., because they are women." (By way of tautology.)

On the other hand, women use these phrases about themselves with equal frequency; "We do not do..... because we are women," or, "We have to do..... because we are women." Male lives are much less bounded and circumscribed. In general, they can behave as they please, within certain less rigidly accepted norms of society. Their behaviour is not defined as a group principle, as is that of the women. The group principle may be used, but only to illustrate the opposition between

male and female practices; "Women do.....because they are women. We do not do... because we are men." That is, because they are non-women. Basically, therefore, as was seen in the last chapter, women's behaviour is more zealously guarded and regulated. They are also perceived in group terms, and perceive themselves in terms of the group. Men are both allowed to be more individualistic and feel themselves more free to be so.

As in all rigid caste ideology, no allowance can be made for being the same but different. It is an existential philosophy - what one does dictates what one is. Therefore if one is not allowed to do something because of the dictates of society, one also cannot be. At extreme distance from the ideas advanced by Levy-Bruhl (1975), this logic is stricter in its preclusions than is ours.

We have seen earlier that the voiced adjectives used by the Kutchi to define the male sex are "higher" and so too is the classification of the work and leisure pursuits that they undertake. In this chapter, it will be seen that height is used practically and symbolically to demarcate status in most contexts.

Problems occasionally arise for the Kutchi in terms of their definitions of men and women from other ethnic groups, who do not adhere sufficiently to the formers' stereo-types and role models. They are worrying in the Douglasian notion of matter out of place. (Douglas 1966). They also pose a challenge to ideology in that they seem able to undertake satisfactorily tasks which certain categories of Kutchi are precluded from doing. Thus, to explain such improprieties, the Kutchi are forced to place white women in a supplementary category because of their education and technical skills and to emphasise the intrinsic difference of Bhil women who trade in towns.

1) SPACE AND STATUS

Men are always accorded more prestigious social space, in terms of where to sit, on what to sit, and at which height. On some occasions, all of these facets come into play. For example when visiting another village, a male guest will be persuaded to sit upon a bed, on the newest, richest quilts and cushions, in the shady, sheltered uthak of the house.

Female guests, unless very old, will join the women in the cooking area or female province of the house where, by the following day at least, they will be helping with cooking or sewing - the more prestigious female tasks - which do not require leaving the confines of the home. They may be given a mat on which to sit to protect their fine visiting clothes or perhaps an old quilt. (The significance of quilts will be discussed shortly.) Anything given is always of inferior quality to that which is given to their male travelling companions. In rare instances in very rich households possessing many beds, which at this point are not required for any male guests, a female guest may be pressed by her hostess to sit on a bed; most, however, decline. These standards usually apply, even if it is the mother or sister of the household head who is visiting.

Seating arrangements are an important differentiating principle between men and non-men. As a general rule, men always sit higher than women. This includes young men and old women. Almost anything can be used to increase height practically and symbolically - mats and quilts, cushions, a tree stump, a trunk, a bed - all will serve the purpose.

This means that women cannot sit upon beds if any men present are sitting on the ground. In any case, a woman cannot sit on a bed or go to sleep on one, in the presence of her husband's elder male kinsmen. Theoretically, a wife can sit on the same bed as her husband, but this rarely happens in practice and never if anyone else is in the vicinity.

More frequently in the hot season when everyone is very wary of scorpions scurrying along the ground, beds are the preferential seating arrangement for a family group sitting chatting in the evening. Women are then seated together on one or two beds. Men are separated spatially, singly or in pairs upon different beds. In these cases, "male" beds have quilts and cushions to prevent discomfort from the bed-strings; "female" beds rarely do.

Conversation can be between beds, on household, political, agricultural, or philosophical matters; or it can be on more personal lines, in which case the group is divided by sex. If ever an affinal elder male arrives however, the women concerned have to slide inconspicuously from the bed to the ground. This does not apply to a very young wife, who never takes the risk, or has the opportunity to be on a bed in the first place. Within the household, avoidance rules are such that she is usually seated at a distance, veiled in a dark corner, or is in a completely different area of the house.

Depending upon the authority or popularity of the elder kinsman in question, his presence will be appreciated and accepted without comment; or people will appear slightly disapproving and some of the older women will mutter darkly under their breath about the intense probability of their "wife", or daughter or sister being bitten by a scorpion. Occasionally, he will be made to feel so unwelcome that he will leave again after sufficient time has elapsed for him not to lose face.

The most usual place for women to sit is on the ground and they are more relaxed and at ease here; perhaps through an acceptance of their "appropriate" place. "Their" ground is often distanced from that of the men. Even if it is not, height, prominence of position, or superior outlook will all prove satisfactory distinguishing features.

In winter, everyone sits on the floor around the fire where it is warmer and although the atmosphere is fairly informal, certain things have to be remembered - a man must not sit beside a woman who is

not either his own kinswoman or his wife - unless the woman happens to be very old and in terms of definitions, asexual. In general, however, women tend to be ranged together on one side and men on the other, so that there are only two points of possible contact which are of consequence.

Separation is to be seen as an important value within the society. The rules are not voiced, as they have been fully internalised by children before they begin to apply and matter to them. Basically, men utilise the "best" space; in a cool breeze in the hot season; nearest the uthak fire, but away from the smoke in the cold season. Thus, space and height are seen as important symbolically in the attribution of appropriate place in Kutchi society.

In addition to being used as an important differentiating principle between men and women, the height of seating arrangement is used between Kutchi men and those of other castes to ascribe superior status, (see photograph eleven). Here some Kutchi men were squatting on the ground, talking to a Sindi landlord who was perched above them on his motorcycle. The Kutchi were thus acknowledging the Sindi's superior status, both political and economic. In a different situation, Kutchi men would expect similar treatment of respect from the lower castes. The statement below was from a young Kutchi man, who was conversing in the house one day:

Bhangi (sweepers) are the most low of castes/people. We cannot eat with them. We cannot sit on the same bed as them. If I were sitting on a bed, a Bhangi would have to sit on the ground. He would be too ashamed to sit beside me.

This seemed similar to husband and wife seating arrangements and so he was asked if it meant that when men sit on beds and their wives sit on the ground, their wives are also low caste/inferior. Hadhu quickly denied this, saying, "No, but a wife has to show izzat (respect) to her husband."

The question, however, obviously embarrassed him and the response given was similar to many. Kutchi men, whatever they actually voiced, nevertheless felt their women to be in an anomalous position. In

everything to do with social behaviour and attitude, their postures and diffidence closely resembled those of "inferior" groups. Sitting, talking, walking and occupying social space, they epitomised the symbolic position of the low castes.

On occasions such as funerals, weddings and births, when there are many guests present, difference between the sexes is emphasised in terms of where the men sit and upon what, rather than upon the height factor. At these times, separation is essential. Places are prepared for both sexes and the visitors are shown their respective areas. The male area is larger and more open, but this is in keeping with their greater freedom of movement and the fact that larger numbers of men travel to "major" events.

As stated earlier, at weddings and births, women conduct the main rituals themselves in a fair degree of privacy. At funerals and times of performed religious expression, the men sit and listen at close quarters. Women, if interested enough, will sit at a distance in a cluster, usually in the dark. In this, I think that they shared a common sentiment with Jeffery's pardah women (1979), who were basically prevented from enjoying activities at the mosque. Kutchi women could be heard complaining of their discomfort, their inability to hear properly, and therefore not understanding the proceedings. Many men do not in fact know what is being sung either, but always imply that they have heard and understand. The difference here is therefore not essentially one of access but of attitude. Men "feel" these to be their areas. Owing to the idiom of segregation throughout the society, women do not.

After visiting somewhere, women will often complain to their menfolk about their poor treatment.

They never make enough tea for the women. It is all right for you men, you get plenty, but we need lots too after a journey. Bet yours was sweeter too!

Such statements by women do not imply a competitiveness with men - that the men should have less or do without. Any such action on the

part of the hostesses would be seen as a personal affront to the status of their menfolk by the visiting women. The latter know what is appropriate hospitality for men and they are not challenging this aspect of Kutchi values. Implicit in such a statement however is criticism of the stranger women; that they cannot give appropriate hospitality to both sexes, that they are poorer, that they cannot make tea so well. In this manner, which exemplifies the competitive nature of the female group, they are emphasising their own superiority in terms of what is provided at home. They expect the men to be in agreement with them over this. The women's behaviour on their own territory towards visiting women is essentially similar, but unquestioned within the home village.

The food served to women at social events can therefore frequently be inferior. I remember at one wedding of a poor family, the father decided that there would not be sufficient lentils for everyone and so the women of the village and the female guests would have to do without and eat plain rice. We did so and no-one complained, although the visitors probably did so when they returned home.

On any type of walk or trip, a woman will walk behind her husband. If a group of men are travelling with their wives, the wives will be at the rear. A man will never enter another man's home, if the husband is absent and only his wife is there. In fact, this is a highly embarrassing thing to do and he feels he has been rather stupid, as the villagers are generally aware of where everyone is at any time and he has obviously not been observing properly. Nor will a man work with another man's wife in the fields, even if there are children present. Men do not eat with their wives. They eat spatially, and generally temporally, separately.

Many men are relaxed and casual about these public controls. They may take them seriously, but are aware of the nuisance they can be for their wives; sometimes say so, and occasionally aid and abet their wives to an "easier", and less rigorous life-style. Things never challenged, however, are the walking position, their eating customs, and

the respect properly accorded in the form of privacy to another man's wife. A man who feels himself to be poor, weak, without power, or nagged will, I noticed, tend to emphasise outward normative controls as a way of trying to improve his position, both in his own eyes and in the opinion of others. There is an ambivalence here between the attitudes of individual men and the underlying male beliefs about women as a sex.

In the above ethnography, we have looked at the practical and symbolic differentiation of men from non-men. Yet in spite of this strict regime or perhaps because of it, men as a sex find women's position as potentially threatening or at least worthy of disquietude. Male affirmation of women's appropriate place is stressed time after time.

Why this fear should exist or be demonstrated at first sight appears a puzzle. The women totally accept the ideology of male superiority. It is a wholehearted acceptance and there is no challenge to the authority structure. They have internalised a perceived appropriateness of place, with all that this entails actually and symbolically. (This may also involve a pride of place and reasons for this will be examined in the next chapter.) Individual powerful women are viewed as individuals and do nothing to challenge basic societal norms.

Outwardly therefore, it would appear that the men have little to fear. Their superior status will remain intact as it has for previous countless generations. And yet, fear is indeed present. It becomes evident in cases of minor transgression. It emerges in conversation. It is embedded deep in the collective consciousness of the men.

There is also a fear of the low castes. Although in the above ethnography, it was seen that the men are reluctant to make the equation between women and the low castes explicit, there is very definite symbolic identification in evidence. We have already seen that inferiors sit lower and walk behind. This applies to women and low

caste men. They are also as far as possible kept spatially distinct. When Bhil men attended a Kutchi bha'o, they were shown a secluded corner, where they were given a large plate of plain rice which they all had to share. This as we have seen is reminiscent of the quality of food given to women and also often of its manner of distribution.

When asking a Kutchi bhagat what happened to the low castes when they died; did they ever achieve moksa - he emphatically stated that they could not because of their great impurity. His wife, with whom he enjoyed a close and loving relationship was present at the time and he was later asked what happened to women in rebirth. He gave the usual answer that it depended on their merit. When pressed more specifically he became embarrassed, as did his wife because of his attitude, and she left us all. His conclusion was eventually that women could become men in later life, if they had behaved in this life exceptionally well. Anything higher than this was deemed more or less impossible for them.

Thus for Kutchi men, we have seen that there is the fear that women will not keep to their appropriate place. There is a similar fear with respect to the lower castes; that they might not be seen to pay deference where it is due. The male justification for this is in terms of impurity. The lower castes are intrinsically impure because of what they do and therefore what they are. In the case of women, biological differences are seen to threaten men with impurity. This will be examined in the next section.

2) SPACE AND CONTACT

A theme underlying many of Kutchi male attitudes was seen to be their required separation from women, because of the reputed impurity of the latter. The prime cause of this impurity is the repetitive menstrual cycle. We will see that it is on account of this basic assumption that direct contact with women has to be avoided. The practical impurity of menstruation is however, seen by men to symbolise

the more general impurity of the female sex and therefore their inferiority.

We have already seen in chapter three that women are ambivalent about menstruation. That they were to some extent very proud and fully aware of the mystery and power present in their own bodies; yet if asked, they talked more along the lines of male and communally spoken belief, as to their own impurity and dirtiness. In what follows, we will look at the way in which the "official" belief of impurity and pollution affects Kutchi daily lives in the areas of space and contact.

Men hug each other in greeting and so do women. Whenever a woman is being greeted by a man however, she must clasp the top corner of her veil between her hands and those of the man to avoid his possible contamination. She does this whether menstruating at the time or not. Thus, any man knows that he is safe from a stranger woman's menstrual pollution.

Quilts are other important household items which could conduct impurity. They are in fact also used to symbolise social values in other respects, some already mentioned, such as superiority, wealth, gender, and are an expression of female work and value in the home. Male and female quilts are either stored in separate piles or are carefully supervised by knowledgeable old women to prevent mistakes occurring. Much of women's time in the cold season is spent sewing or repairing quilts, which are both necessary household items and objects of prestige. There is a definite ordering of the quilts in terms of colour, quality of fabric, age, and even design of cloth.

Some quilts are specifically for women and are made of old skirt or veil cloth. The former are very polluting and must never be sat or slept on by men, even if the cloth were by any chance to be new. The predominant colour of these fabrics is red and red is socially recognised as the female colour. Such a quilt is used by a woman in labour and she wraps herself in it afterwards. It may also be used if her period is very heavy and she is sleeping on the floor. Quilts

earmarked for such purposes are perceived to be the most polluting of all.

Quilts which have become old, faded and torn are also used by the women of the household, especially by widows or by women with young children, the latter being prone to wetting the bed at night and this being viewed as both uncomfortable and polluting. Quilts may be washed outside the village and hung on the thorn bushes to dry, but they are never considered properly clean again, and are treated with suitable caution. This is also true if a new skirt becomes "spoiled" with menstrual blood.

The richer the household, the better may be the women's quilts, but they are always of inferior cloth, age and texture to the men's. Men of the house have better quilts than boys, who in turn have better ones than the women and girls.

Male guests, however, have better quilts than all residents, and these are kept beautifully folded and ready for visitors. Newly sewn and hardly used, such quilts are a great honour, but must be accepted without gratitude and as if commonplace by distinguished visitors. Even at large gatherings, such as weddings and bha'o, important men have quilts kept for them at important households. Younger and poorer men may sometimes have to share a quilt of intermediate quality and often grumble about the lack of hospitality shown or the poverty of the village. It is usually more of a reflection upon their own status as perceived by others than that of the village however.

Female visitors are rarely accorded good quilts, there being few good ones of female type to give. They are therefore given women's unpolluted quilts; newer perhaps than those of the household women. In general for women guests, there is more sharing under poorer quilts.

In the cold season, men may sit on quilts on the ground if visiting; so may the household men if they are entertaining guests and rich enough. These quilts are not as good as the bed quilts nor are they

female quilts.

Thus there can be no question of men becoming contaminated by women, either through themselves or through menstruation. It is considered highly polluting for a man to sit where a woman has been sitting. Any contact with her lower body is thought in male ideology to be polluting. From the above descriptions, we can see that menstruation and other biological differences have been given symbolic values, which in turn provide an oppositional working principle. The male illusion of threat or challenge, could therefore be seen to result either from the woman's underlying nature itself, or from the symbolic significance attached to that nature.

Sexual intercourse is an ambiguous exception to this and has been discussed in the preceding part. However, it is important to emphasise it here as a social point which illustrates necessary male ambivalence to women as a sex. Although in many senses women are out of society in male evaluation, they are in fact an integral part of it - essential for its continuance and the perpetuation of its reality through child-bearing and through rituals. It is the ambivalent nature of women that perhaps causes the afore-mentioned male fear. (See among others, Levi-Strauss 1969, Douglas 1966, Harper 1969).

To illustrate this amongst the Kutchi, women past menstrual age are no longer feared by men. They are suddenly granted rights and to some extent honorary male status. In a similar way, barren women are not feared by men. Their husbands may be pitied, but the women themselves are not seen as a threat. They are more of one to other women who find them very inauspicious. Equally, women may fear older women because of the power they can wield. It is more general to pity them however, because women themselves feel the intrinsic importance of menstruation to their own status and being.

CONCLUSIONS

In this part we have looked at the symbolic expressions of status and distinctiveness in Kutchi daily lives. Separation and height have been given values in almost all contexts to distinguish superior from inferior and the same idiom is used to separate Kutchi men from both non-men and non-Kutchi-men. There was seen to be a symbolic equation of women with the lower castes and the formers' caste mentality as illustrated in other sections would tend to confirm their own response to this. Menstruation was looked at as a means whereby the men justify difference and we examined the affect this has upon Kutchi daily life in terms of contact and threatened contamination by female pollution.

To finish, I am going to suggest as another possibility that in terms of women and the lower castes, Kutchi men may hold a realisation of the lack of true difference, where much has been done to emphasise one.

As Levi Strauss says:

"Castes naturalize a true culture falsely." (1966a:127)

This could also be applied to women's status in Kutchi society.

Thus, Kutchi men may realise all too well the similarities between themselves and their women, and the men of other castes. On account of this and to maintain their own position, they perhaps stress and bring into focus the differences.

In the chapter as a whole, the emphasis has been at the level of thought and symbols. The data illustrated the complementary nature of male and female world-view and attitudes. The focus has been upon female roles outwith the household situation, their implicit values and upon female forms of wisdom. In this respect we looked at male and female separate and opposing roles in ritual, their attitudes towards sexuality, their differing modes of expression in terms of speech and

thought, and lastly their shared societal values with respect to the appropriate allocation of space and status.

Photographs IV



10. Men preparing the wedding food.

11. Kutchi men
with Sindi
landlords



12. Parkari
Koli encampment

CHAPTER FIVE: *WOMEN IN EXTERNAL SOCIETY*

INTRODUCTION

Having explored in the two previous chapters the main domains of women - the hearth, the home, the family, the inside - it is now time to observe them as they shift their gaze to the outside world; as they look beyond the village boundaries and the familiar categorised structures to the relatively wild, unsafe and unbounded fields, villages, towns and countries of the "outside".

Elements of the above contrast have obviously emerged in earlier chapters, where distinctions were made as to the degree women were concerned with the internal as compared to men, in terms of actual space, activities, and modes of thought.

There was also seen to be a difference in terms of type of ritual expression, form of ritual itself, and rationalization of cosmology. I have stressed that these female interpretations were modelled upon their social and geographic position and sought to emphasise the necessity of their domesticity and insularity.

In this chapter, with its increasing focus on the outside, I am going to explore the possibilities for Kutchi women of venturing into this relatively unknown environment through the legitimate rights of exit, and the manipulable ones. However, I must state here that centripetal

desires are much stronger for the women than centrifugal ones.

Introduction.

1) Moving Home.

2) Visiting.

3) Illness.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

There are few accessible routes to the outside for women. Men are the ones who undertake the purchasing from the villages and towns; trade; are employed in far-afield agricultural work; have contact with other ethnic groups; and do the most social visiting. As stated earlier, women group together to carry out agricultural labour (usually with men present at some distance to watch over them); to chop wood (generally a boy accompanies these axe-armed women to give them protection); and to go to the sand-dunes to defecate. In practice, although rarely, women can do the above alone. In this case they risk punishment from husband or father or from their fellow women, who will show their displeasure by ignoring the offender or gossiping about her.

I do not mean to imply that it is only fear of retribution and social control which prevents women from venturing outside the required areas. Amongst all the women there was a basic fear of the land beyond the village fields or even beyond their own fields, of the sand-dunes, and of the localities with bush cover. This fear, although perhaps bound up with certain supernatural possibilities and at least stressing the danger of the unknown, the untamed and uncultivated, was in the main a response to human elements. The thought of lurking Sindi men, waiting to abduct innocent Kutchi women, rape them, and place them in irretrievable purdah forever, was an all-pervasive and intensely believed notion.

The men either believed this too or perpetually acted as if they did. Forever watchful and wary, they worried as to where the village women were and became extremely agitated if any strangers were in the vicinity. These beliefs and those of the women continually reinforced each other's greatest fears.

Young girls too became affected; running in from the fields terrified, saying that they had been chased by a Sindi. If their work was not then of great economic importance to the family, they might be told by their fathers not to go out to the fields anymore, at least not for a while and certainly not to distant ones.

Certainly, Pakistan is rife with tales of missing girls and women. Not only amongst the Kutchi, but amongst other Hindu groups and amongst the white community the fears are very pronounced. Actual cases of abduction were reported and, broadly speaking, the environment is not conducive to female safety. On the other hand, of course, myths have grown up around this, making every step prone to supreme danger and anxiety. Exaggeration probably, when one surveys a single, poor Sindi, working conscientiously in his field. What would he do with a screaming, lashing Kutchi woman, or white anthropologist, if he caught her, miles away from his village, with no means of transport, and surrounded by Kutchi fields manned by cross-looking Kutchi labourers? Yet theoretically the possibility exists and with it the reluctance on the part of women actually to want to go far afield, alone or accompanied.

Many women used to say that they did not know what the other side of the sand- dunes looked like, (see also Jeffery 1979). Few knew in which direction all but the nearest villages lay. Most did not care. Some wives would try to piece together bits of information gained from husbands, as to where the latter had visited. This exercise resembled the attempt at interpretation of a map of an unknown place, complex and with few recognisable reference points, totally unseen and "unfelt" by the would-be interpreter. There is a similarity here with the picture portrayed by Bourdieu (1979), of the initial blind

scramblings of the anthropologist, as he/she desperately tries to orientate herself/himself around a cultural map without a compass or an adequate knowledge of the language to ask for directions.

Kutchi women, probably less confident in their ability to master the situation eventually or perhaps more realistic in their endeavours, fairly soon desist from such practices, seeing the external world through man's mirror and their own imaginations. This response to a more or less impossible task satisfies most. Some, however, remain partially discontent, laughing in shame at their own lack of knowledge of nearby geography and the outside world in general. This especially affects the older women, who feel that they should know more, having spent longer in total in the area and now sharing a more equal power relationship with the old men except for this gulf in knowledge.

My own position in the field would of course make them focus on these "lacks" more than usual. As an obvious stranger to the locality and yet with the relative ability to come and go as I pleased - with knowledge not only of my own far off country, but also of cities in Pakistan and India of which they knew only the names - I reluctantly provided a comparison for them. Not that they in fact wanted a similar life, anything but. They were sorry for me. But they perhaps described from their own lives what they perceived to be priorities for me. I judge this to be unfortunate, but unavoidable. Allowances will of course therefore have to be made in these type of information areas, where as western women, we actually embody an opposing value system, without so much as opening our mouths.

There exist three legitimate routes for women to leave the village:- moving home, visiting, and illness. I shall deal with each in turn.

1) MOVING HOME

Marriage is the commonest reason for a woman to leave home, and has been discussed amply in chapter three. Here, suffice it to reiterate the bonds the woman has with her natal village, the stranger/outsider status attributed in her marital village, and the associated worry and fear she has in leaving the former. It is an integral and necessary part of Kutchi life and customs, but it does not make it any less affecting emotionally for each girl when her time comes. Initially, they will always say that they do not like their new village. This will be expressed in terms of the physical environment - too much sand, too much mud near the canal, too few trees - rather than in terms of the lost human relationships.

In a similar way, Kutchi women talk of "the cold" of a faraway place, as opposed to the "heat" of home. Muttering sadly about a wedding that had taken place in the north, they turned angrily upon someone who was similarly lamenting a closer wedding:

"That one is near, where is the cold in that?"

Kutchi women will in fact always express their emotions in terms of concrete, physical attributes. They will never say that they are worried or sad, but that they have a headache. They will never say that they dislike their new affines, but that the village itself does not suit them.

The wife who has to move with her husband to better land or landlord, having settled in a village, will be equally miserable. Generally, she delays leaving as long as possible, letting her husband organise some sort of home for the family before everything is moved. At the time of departure, there is much grief expressed between the women, hugging, crying and wailing and this takes on a semi-ritually institutionalised form, similar to that of the wedding, with a procession of women arriving at her house, ceremonial hugging, leave-taking and escorting to the village gate.

In all these cases, the woman will of course, be accompanied by her husband, or male kinsman. Legitimate exit routes never involve women travelling on their own or even in groups.

2) VISITING

It is relatively rare for Kutchi women to leave the village to visit in another one, but it is accepted and even expected in certain cases. The occurrence probably averages two to three times per year, with older married women being the most frequent visitors. The most common reasons are the life-cycle events, especially weddings, where quite large parties will often go together. Closer kin will also visit for a naming ceremony, or a family death.

With the exception of death, visiting involves dressing in one's newest and best clothes and wearing as much jewelry as possible. Baths are taken first and there is an air of excitement and anticipation amongst the female group. In contrast, those visited wear their usual attire, many days' dirt and usually complain about the extra work visitors involve.

In most cases, the women travel not only with their husbands, but with other village women also with their husbands. It is a group endeavour and there is security in the crowd.

Sometimes a man will take only his wife and children to visit very close kin and it will be more of an individual enterprise. This is however rarer and a woman does not enjoy this as much. She may like it when she arrives, if she is a friend of the woman she is visiting, but in general, it is regarded as more of an ordeal, especially the travelling without group support. In addition, it does not have the festive excuse for joy of a wedding or sathi.

Travelling is always a problem for Kutchi women. Their heavy wide skirts and their anklets and loose shoes impede walking. With children

and goods to carry it becomes even more difficult. Thus, they tend to refuse to walk any type of distance outside the village boundaries, insisting instead upon the slow, bumpy pace of an ox-cart or increasingly a horse-drawn buggy, a jeep, or a lorry.

I mentioned earlier that the men are the owners and drivers of these wheeled vehicles, but women are the most socially acceptable passengers. The prospect of women being able to drive, filled both sexes with considerable mirth. They would be struck by the complete inappropriateness of it and the women would introduce the impracticalities of cumbersome clothing and the pointlessness of it all; where would they go?; what would they do? Another dimension was the pure mechanics of it - how would women ever manage to master such a difficult art? It was difficult enough for men and they were "meant" to do such things.

Approximately halfway through the research however, a western female missionary arrived in the village driving her own jeep. This created total consternation. No-one could believe it. The whole village gathered to watch this spectacle. All had previously seen men driving, but never a woman, as this is not at all acceptable throughout Pakistan, even in the cities.

Disbelief on their faces, they all waited for something to happen as she started the engine to leave the village. I could feel them positively willing something to go wrong, so as not to threaten their world-view. Sure enough, overcome with nerves and all those eyes watching her - she stalled. Laughing relaxedly now and slapping each other's backs congratulatorily, they said - "We knew she would not be able to drive." Some people seemed subdued, as if they had been fooled and deceived, and started reminding the others that she had arrived in the jeep. She started the engine again and moved, negotiating the village clearing somewhat haphazardly. After she had visited the village several times, she ceased to have novelty value and an interesting re-interpretation was placed upon her abilities.

It is because she is white/western you know. They learn to do things like that there. It is because they have

book-knowledge. Look at Sarah (me), she can read and write. They are all clever. We women cannot learn to do anything like that. It is impossible.

In response to my assertion that they could indeed learn to read if they wanted to, they always promptly responded that there was no point learning to read if they were just going to live in the "jungle", and they had no intention of ever living elsewhere.

Thus, although here it could be said with justification that the women were simply echoing male belief on the subject, their actual attitudes and their lack of interest illustrated clearly that such practices were devalued by them and deemed irrelevant, if not foolish.

Attempts were later made by the women either to prevent the woman driver from coming alone, or at least to persuade some man to drive her and accompany her. (These were their terms as she was always accompanied by a Bhil woman and was therefore not "alone".) Similar to the fears expressed earlier in the chapter, the villagers were genuinely concerned about the dangers liable to befall a woman driving on her own, from either thieves or rapists.

It is to be noted in the above example, not only the sexual segregation in practice, but also in value. Male and female groups maintain different attitudes to appropriateness and in social contexts are continuously defining place and affirming boundaries. These acts are performed by both groups and although ^{may} appear asymmetrical in our terms, nevertheless conform to Kutchi notions of reality.

Women are however defined as appropriate passengers. Perhaps this could further be described as the men inflicting a dominant ideology upon the women to further curtail their freedom. If so, the women fully subscribe to it, loving to be transported over the smallest distance. They do not like walking over the sand or on dusty tracks in the heat, perhaps unsurprisingly. Nevertheless, because men feel able to undertake such travels very easily, they are always able to journey here and there as a normal expected activity. For women to go

anywhere more organisation usually has to be involved. It is seen in the realm of an official event, necessitating male driving skill and supervision. (See also Jeffery 1979; Jacobson 1977.)

I must emphasise here that older women are not so dependent upon the trappings of modern transportation. If they travel anywhere with their husbands, which is rarer, they will happily hoist their bundles upon their heads and stride out behind their men over the sand. These women are more used to the days when the Kutchi had less money, were semi-nomadic, and more self-reliant; and so perhaps find it easier than the young women.

In fact, Kutchi women probably walk further during a day of agricultural labours and collecting wood, than they would on a trip from the village to the main road. Yet they believe the latter to be much more strenuous, to result in at least a headache, if not a fever, and to be something which must mostly be avoided.

Having navigated the sand dunes, or mud paths surrounding the villages, the problems are often not at an end. If the journey involves travelling by public bus, this is another ordeal for the women. Hindu Scheduled Caste women are laughed at and treated as inferior by Moslem men, who are the most frequent users of Sindi buses. The few Moslem women in purdah who travel on buses have "ladies' seats" kept for them. They dislike "lower" caste women in proximity and will often try to prevent them from sitting beside them by taking up all the available space with goods, children and their own bodies, by making offensive remarks or generally making things uncomfortable for the Hindu woman, who simply wants to slip quickly and unnoticed into a seat, veiled and unrecognisable. Often the latter have to sit on the bus floor in their best clothes, with their children. For women of "higher" social groups this would be unheard of. Men would give up their seats for them or be forced to do so by the bus conductor.

Kutchi women behave with stoicism about such treatment and basically seem to distance themselves from their surroundings. They

believe firmly in their own cultural superiority and think of "others" as misguided. Their menfolk generally sit ashamedly at the back of the bus, too embarrassed and shy to interfere, seeing their womenfolk in some respects through strangers' eyes.

Bus journeys are not, therefore, pleasant, enjoyable adventures into the outside world for women or their accompanying men, but rather something to be endured to get from A to B.

Once B is reached, there is also the problem of the walk at the end through strange territory. If a change of buses is involved, the women have to pass the waiting time at or near the bus station. Here, the men may buy them snacks or trinkets to keep them occupied, but basically the women remain tense, feeling out of place, wary of prying eyes and actual harrassment. (In areas to the east and into the desert, where a much greater proportion of the population consists of Hindu people, there is apparently less harrassment, owing to the fact that many more proportionately travel and exist.)

On arrival at the visited village, the guests will be taken to the house where they have the closest kinship links or where the festivities are to be held. Here they will be segregated, men with the men, women with the women, usually around an internal or external hearth. There is a long initial stage of greeting and talk. Then, basically whatever the event, the women will contribute to the household's internal workload, preparing vegetables, making chapatti, sewing a skirt or blouse to be worn by an important person in the ritual proceedings. All these activities take place within the enclosed household area. Stranger women cannot wander around an unfamiliar village; they will not even be sent to fetch water. If there are men around who must be avoided, and there generally are at such events, enclosure and invisibility are even more essential.

Mostly, the women huddle together in one dark room; unable to see or go out; plagued by flies and bored children in the hot season; and by smoke and bored children in the cold season. After the initial

pleasure of renewing acquaintances and chatting, a general sense of apathy, boredom and discomfort spreads into the gathering. They want to know what is happening outside and to their menfolk. They want to discover when they will be leaving. They complain quietly about the work they are being asked to do. Discussions soon turn inwards again and amongst their fellow village women, they mutter about aspects they would apparently not have to suffer on their own territory; the lack of mosquito nets, beds, good quilts, food and water at the proper times, familiar places to urinate and defecate. They generally decide that they want to return home as soon as possible.

Kutchi women say that they are only really happy in their home village. This becomes apparent in many ways when they visit. Why this should be so is hypothesised to be a response both to the female world-view and also to social change which shall be examined in the last ethnographic part of the thesis.

Young girls, however, greatly enjoy visiting other villages. They are excited long in advance; keen to wear their finest clothes, explore a new village and meet other girls. Not as yet for them, the perceptions of adult life; seclusion, avoidance, and the reality of external threats. In fact, they seem to enjoy visiting more than boys who tend to prefer their home environment and playmates.

Many women appear to enjoy the prospect of going visiting, but dislike it in actuality. Others are quite happy to admit that they do not like it in the first place:

I do not really like going away from this village. I never really enjoy myself. I only spent one night at Gori's, and then wanted to come back. There were millions of mosquitoes there and I was bitten to death anyway.

Others will make excuses never to leave the village, pretending that it is impossible because of the children.

The only women to like it are young wives returning to their natal village or meeting their kin at another village, or unusually extrovert, talkative types - totally unaffected by travelling problems and social

pressures.

Very frequently, when spending a night in another village, women will report severe headaches and try to sleep early without food. Some of these turn into fevers and the causes are always diagnosed as the travelling and the strange village.

3) ILLNESS

This has become increasingly a reason for women to leave the village in recent years and is a strong indicator of social change and the prevalence of "western medicine". The belief in the efficacy of "the needle", generally the injection of coloured water for the cheapest, perhaps of anti-biotics or iron for the most expensive, has gained more or less total popular support in the area.

People will be taken for "needles" to cure any type of ailment from tuberculosis to urinating too frequently, from spirit possession to measles. Nothing is beyond the power of "needles". If the first has not done any good, then one has to have a more expensive one. However, there are still exceptions - broken bones are taken to a bone-setter, not a "needle" specialist; barren women are taken to a midwife in town. By far the majority of troubles are theoretically curable by "needle", however. Whether people are actually taken for a "needle" for minor ailments depends very much upon the economic status of the family. Most will be taken for one in severe cases of illness or the family will be chastised for their neglect by the rest of the community. It is general to wait for the fever or diarrhoea to have subsided sufficiently to undertake the travelling however and many people are thus given injections when ostensibly "better".

The cost of injections and of travelling drives a wedge between rich and poor and upsets many a poor family. The latter will loudly proclaim their misery at being unable to afford a "needle" for a child with measles. The fact that a child with a "needle" recovers after

fourteen days and the needleless child after a fortnight, does nothing whatsoever to deter the basic belief in the efficacy of the cure.

My first encounter with injections came after only a few days in the village, when travelling back from a kharas by ox-cart. Passing a walled Sindi village, one woman asked her husband to stop to let their fevered child have a "needle". We did so, whereupon most of the other women present took their similar babes-in-arms to have one as well; an opportunity not to be missed.

Yet in other instances, they insist that someone should actually be ill or should not be given an injection. The idea of preventative injections for polio or tuberculosis appeared to them to be dangerous and foolhardy. Thus, there must always be some ostensible reason or proof, but in some cases this can obviously be stretched.

It is women's responsibility to draw attention to the need for a "needle" for the children. A mother can talk to her husband about the illness of a child but not about her own; for the latter, another household woman should bring up the subject in conversation. An affluent and caring husband, will then make arrangements to take his wife into town.

Poor women and their children either have less time to become ill, become ill less, or else do not mention it as they know that the family finances will suffer accordingly. Yet, when they do, it can be an opportunity of rest from work, nicer food to eat, and more social attention. Young girls likewise revel in the luxury of being ill, eating sweetmeats brought by father, lying in bed all day, and having soothing massages.

Men, in contrast, have much fewer outward signs of illness. Something must be severely wrong before they go into town to have a "needle" or to buy some pills. In such cases, much familial financial sacrifice will be made to try to cure the man in question. Everything possible will be sold, including the wife's jewelry. There must be no

stinginess in efforts to save him or the family will suffer public retribution and gossip for their sins in sending him to the grave, especially his widow.

Yet, for minor ailments, injections and towns seem to be a response to woman's subordinate and to some extent neglected position vis-a-vis men. In this manner they gain unusual care and attention from the family. Sometimes in fact, a newly married daughter will be permitted to return home to care for her mother and to help with the family.

Rich women perhaps benefit from another rationale. Their husbands would be judged mean and uncaring by the community if they did not respond to the wife's call for medical treatment. Thus, at a pre-arranged time, she will be taken into town, usually with the children, to have a needle. These visits may involve the travelling problems mentioned earlier, but they do not involve an overnight stay and are not group events. A woman thus returns later in the day, laden with material possessions from the town; exotic foods, cloth, pots; all things which are impossible to buy in the village, especially in private. Not surprisingly in this intensely competitive female realm, a few days later, another rich woman may complain to her husband of an ailment, whereupon she will be taken to town to return with similar prizes.

In the village in which we were staying, this was becoming an increasingly regular phenomenon, even whilst I was there. The patel had bought a tractor with a trailer and his son latterly purchased an old jeep. Both of these vehicles could be used for the journey into town, the former free, but only on specific days, the latter at a fixed price for the return trip. Rich women were utilising these resources a great deal. Abolishing the travelling problems, they enabled conspicuous commodity acquisition.

Yet, the women must still be accompanied by the men for any such ventures into the "wild". Although certain parts of the outside are becoming increasingly "known", the basic format for exploration remains

unchanged and so far unthreatened. Men are still required for protection and as mediators of the "wild". In this respect, women are fundamentally isolated in the village and this strikes their consciousness, whenever accidents occur.

For example, once a little boy fell and badly broke his arm. There were no men in the village at the time able to take Muno to the bone-setter in town apart from my husband. After they had left, the women gathered helplessly to discuss what they would have done if he had not been there. They on this occasion, stressed their sense of isolation, the fact that they were just women, and could do nothing within the village in such a crisis.

Another time, the bhopi in a neighbouring village had fainted while bathing at Hachmo, reputedly some form of possession. Again, there was no-one in their village able to take her to town and the women were panicked by their helplessness. Finally, they sent a boy to "our" village to fetch the bhopi's son-in-law, so that he could accompany her for a needle. Boys are able to travel to nearby villages, but do not have sufficient status or protection-value to take a woman into town.

Thus, although some women are making increasing use of a legitimate mode of exit from the village, basically it only affects the women's internal status ranking system, increasing political differences, rather than changing their fundamental relationship to their menfolk, the village and the outside. As a sex, they define their appropriate place to be within the village. Associatedly, they accept the gender disadvantages in the described situations of crisis. With no alternative gender models in Pakistan, they do not wish to change the societal norms, but only to have more men available as a response to such times. (See also Sharma 1980:208.)

Old women, especially widows, are not taken for injections. They dislike to travel, saying that they are too old and weak. Their responses to illness are therefore more traditional. There is a deep and general reluctance to talk about an old person who is ill. Others try to ignore

it as long as possible in order not to tempt fate. Whilst there, I saw very little traditional medicine; any that existed was amongst the old. Sympathetic ideas underlay much of their ideology in this respect - dog's excrement smeared on to a bad dog bite; chicken's testicles being curative of a cold (phlegm and semen being ideologically equated); not touching water with a fever; or tying someone up in the house if they had had contact with rabies.

Perhaps their continued reliance upon traditional ideas stems from the fact that the old in general have less money and time spent on them (especially old women), and that they correspondingly have less chance of being taken for a "needle".

On one occasion however when a great-grandmother was very ill with prolonged dysentery, her rich grandson fetched a doctor to the village for her. A "needle" and later an insulin drip, were administered. This was a very popular move; the old lady recovering; the man's status emphasised; and an opportunity given for every woman in the village to obtain needles for themselves and for their children - potency and quantity dependent upon available monetary resources.

The use of opportune healers is not confined to doctors. When a young village man became possessed one night, a neighbouring Bhil reputed to have special powers was fetched. Having helped the man, he was asked for advice and cures from many of those present for family handicaps and ailments.

Similarly, phopa will be consulted over problems which fail to improve after much utilisation of "modern" techniques. The phopa will usually tie threads round the affected part of the person and ask for a sacrifice to the shrine deity. Offerings will be given at the graves of Sindi Moslem pir (saints) to improve handicaps or long-term sufferings, basically with the attitude that absolutely anything must be at least tried.

There is a deep dread of hospitals:

You go there, and they make you breathe something, and you stop breathing; and they open you up, and take things out, and put things in, and fasten you up again. In the morning, if breath comes back you live, if not you die. Outside there are posters with men with hands up in the air, with two fingers up, warning folk not to come in. Most folk prefer to die at home.

If someone recovers from an illness, thanksgiving sweets are given in a bha'o.

CONCLUSION

In this part, I have dealt with three legitimate responses to women's internal village position. In all, they still involve only rare excursions from the village. However, as I have illustrated, as yet the women prefer it this way. The odd forage to the outside, like a hunter pursuing game into the jungle, only makes their return seem that much more sweet to them. The women do not assess themselves by the rules of the outside in anything but gender. They compete within their own environment with those who have the same values and perceptions. They do not want to play the male game nor that of other ethnic groups; and to a great extent they keep their identity distinct from the evaluations of any of these groups.

Journeys for women are bounded and circumscribed, and increasing occurrences do not challenge the basic asymmetrical status differences between men and women, the accepted ideology and the spatial disparity. Threats and dangers were seen to abound for women outside the village; unsurprising then their reluctance to venture from safety. They therefore lack not only external language, mobility, legitimacy and possibility, but also the basic motivation.

PART TWO: WOMEN AND THE PRESERVATION OF ETHNIC PURITY

Introduction.

1) Language.

2) Clothing.

3) Food.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

In earlier chapters, I have stressed women's concern with the maintenance of Kutchi traditions and practices. I have emphasised their internal group nature; the importance of boundaries, categories and language. Their encapsulation, lack of mobility and inability to transcend their environment have all been described.

The above are all associated with the themes of this part. In it, I will concentrate upon the specific practices of the women in the implicit maintenance of distinctness, their actual relationship with other ethnic groups and the corresponding ideology. Three main aspects are important in this context; food, clothes and language.

In these three areas, there is striking difference between the behaviour of the women and that of the men. The men mainly, and increasingly, speak languages other than their mother-tongue ; Sindhi in work and trade contexts; Urdu in situations of especial prestige. Mainly and increasingly, they also wear the Pakistani national dress of shalwar/chemise, theoretically specifically belonging to the Moslem majority. Younger men wear it in many darker colours, not just the

traditional Kutchi white. This is another adoption from Moslem practices which ensures that they do not look distinct in a crowd. Similarly with food, outside the village men will often eat food prepared by other ethnic groups. They will frequent tea-shops and concern themselves little with caste purity.

For women, life is very different. They exaggerate the importance of the three areas of language, clothing and food in their daily lives. They strive to maintain standards and identity. Kutchi women could be said to love caste. They revel in it, its intricacies and associations. Their eyes gleam if they are ever asked about it and they will go into great length and depth to explain who is below them, why, and what this entails in practice. Often this involves other modes of expression than mere words.

Men, on the other hand, find caste in most contexts more embarrassing; not for them the advantages of caste but its disadvantages. Venturing frequently into the outside world, they are constantly being rebuffed by the discrimination and value-judgements of others. Being recognised as a Kutchi is, for the most part, a problem rather than a strength. Cowed and defenceless, they retreat to the relative haven of the village, where at least they can maintain their superiority in terms of their womenfolk and where that superiority is given legitimacy by the dominated group.

At this stage, perhaps the reader should refresh her/his knowledge of the other main ethnic groups in Sind, (listed at the end of the thesis), as they will constantly appear throughout this part.

1) LANGUAGE

Dealing with language, the first of these categories, we find some interesting things. Kutchi women are happy speaking Kutchi. They see it as their language and do not undervalue it in terms of status or use. The intensity of this pride varies according to the amount of

external contacts the women have had. Those who live, or have lived in mixed villages - one half Sindi, and one half Kutchi - - are generally much more aware of the importance of Sindhi in external communication; and of their own status positions vis-a-vis the outside world.

The women from the above are thus more subdued on the subject of caste and slightly more defensive about Kutchi beliefs. Women who work alongside Sindi women in the fields of a common landlord mostly have a working knowledge of Sindhi and will talk with these women. They realise that they share a common lifestyle in terms of work, subordination and market fluctuations. Yet, although these women may be referred to as "friends" to their faces, behind their backs Kutchi references and value-judgements are derogatory.

These Kutchi women do not perceive any intrinsic superiority in the Sindi women. They find their habits and customs revolting in the extreme. They have, however, come to recognise the extra possibilities Sindi have in terms of law and order, language, religion, and education. Not that, in fact, the Sindi make much use of these; in the main they are as poor, sometimes poorer than the Kutchi; but in the background there is always the knowledge that society regards them more favourably.

The attitude of these Kutchi women is not surprising in the light of my argument; that Kutchi men generally have a lower opinion of themselves because of their greater contact with the outside world. It would follow then, that the more contacts the women have, the more their own caste pride in their identity will suffer. Yet, society as a whole prevents this trend. Culturally, it is important for women to be isolated as much as is economically viable. This accords not only with Moslem belief, but with Hindu as well. There are thus structures prevailing against female acquisition of external knowledge. No such prevention of male knowledge exists; in fact, the opposite is the case, men have to travel, mediate and exchange.

When I first visited a "mixed village", I was amazed, coming from "mine", to see how well Kutchi and Sindi women interacted together. The Sindi women had entered the Kutchi section (a thing they rarely did) in order to view this white visitor. They all talked for a while on a superficial level, mainly about me - "What is she wearing your clothes for? Does it not make you angry?" The Kutchi responded, irritatedly but proudly, "No, why should it? She can wear what is pleasing to her." Otherwise, they talked about agricultural work and general domestic matters.

The Kutchi were extremely pleasant to them on the surface. After they had gone, however, they talked knowingly amongst themselves about Sindi men being thieves, robbers, and women snatchers; and how the women discussed rude and immoral things and were constantly swearing.

Behind all these distastes was the deeper disgust of their eating and sexual habits; the fact that they eat buffalo without a qualm and that they marry "incestuously" within the family of close kin. Both of these, in popular Kutchi ideology, emphasised their own strength of character in opposition to that of the Sindi. Sindi women were weak, in that they did not marry into distant and somewhat hostile groups. They were weak as a people, in permitting themselves to eat sacred, but cheap meat. This denoted an absence of self-control and in Kutchi "official" ideology it meant that they possessed no worthy values. Insidious values which have infiltrated Kutchi culture are either consciously or unconsciously denied by a failure on the part of the Kutchi to admit their existence or origin.

Informal meetings in "mixed villages" were however a contrast to the situation in the host village and in others like it, where most of the women did not speak Sindhi and did not have regular contact with Sindi. Here, there were many more mythical notions attributed to the opposing group; even more inhuman behaviour. Exceptions to this were amongst the old women, who had learned Sindhi in the semi-nomadic

past; or perhaps women whose natal village had been "mixed". These women were fairly satisfied with their linguistic ability but it was not perceived as something of which to be proud. Sometimes, they would talk to the occasional beggar in Sindhi, or to peddlars, or to an outsider who happened to pass by. (Women of dangerously young age of course do not talk to any men. Such interactions are taboo and limited by their general codes of behaviour.)

The women saw, however, that the knowledge of Sindhi was useful to their menfolk. Increasingly, some also mentioned that literacy in Sindhi would be "good", for at least one of their sons. Education is still perceived as being of very limited use value. The reading of the occasional legal document and the writing of monetary transactions and cotton weights were seen as the appropriate ends of education. Its associated status was an accepted by-product but was the result of the existing economic superiority of a given family rather than its outcome. It was not yet felt sufficiently prestigious or necessary to have more than one son educated.

In respect to other ethnic groups, even if the Kutchi had lived near them for a while, they would, at the most, have acquired a mere smattering of the language. Some may, however, have learned to adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards the lower castes. This was not the norm and never challenged basic assumptions. Examples of the first attitude are shown in the following two statements.

Parkari are the same as us really.

Yes, Bhil women do do a lot of work. At the moment they are working for the patel; getting grass for their own animals; providing their family's food and water; and helping their husbands build their new houses in the evening.

The latter statement was made in response to a criticism of them.

By far the most usual response to the "lower" castes was, however, in terms of disgust and distancing. In this vein, statements were too daily and numerous to list and aspects will become more apparent in the next two sections on clothing and food.

In general, I conclude this section by stressing that Sindi are something of an anomalous category for the Kutchi. The latter feel strongly that Sindi can never be trusted totally in terms of women, friendship, and money. But they are nevertheless forced to introduce the Sindi into their social reality to an extent which never happens with the "lower" castes. The Kutchi can exist without any contact with the latter, apart from perhaps ideological.

2) CLOTHING

As I mentioned in the introduction, differences between the ethnic groups in Sind are in the main signified by the clothes of the women. Different groups possess different colour schemes, different styles, or different jewelry. Each outfit of a fairly uniform nature marks membership of a specific group, tribe or caste.

Increasingly, male members of groups have little to distinguish them from male members of other groups. Shalwar-chemise has become the outfit for all young to middle-aged men. Nor is there much difference in terms of colours chosen these days.

Old Kutchi men, especially those with positions of importance in their own villages, such as patel, bhagat, and bhopa, may have retained the white shirt, white dhoti and putka of Hindu origin. Bhil can generally be differentiated, as they wear a gold earring in the right ear. Groups of Hindu men, especially older ones, if passing through town on the way to a wedding, can usually be distinguished because of their white shalwar-chemise, white patka, and green blankets for the Kutchi; pink blankets for the Bhil; and yellow for the Parkari.

In general however, there are no immediately visible signs for recognition amongst the men, as there are amongst the women; and the former can pass unnoticed in most places, except for prior knowledge or association.

Younger Kutchi men seem reluctant to take their women into town; perhaps because they themselves will be immediately recognised as Kutchi. This is especially the case amongst men who are relatively rich and influential in terms of "modern" means, values and symbols. They therefore tend to have their daughters dressed in Sindi-type clothes for as long as they are "decently" able, so that the children can accompany them into town, without revealing their group.

The women, on the other hand, were positively proud of their clothing; boasted about it, showed it off, and generally felt it to be superior to that of any other group. They made great efforts to emphasise its distinctness and to preserve its uniformity. New fashions, in terms of colour and fabric for blouses and veils, were closely scrutinised by everyone and only accepted if found to be in keeping with the orthodox Kutchi model. A woman wearing something slightly deviant, would attract so many adverse comments that no-one would copy her and she would therefore soon stop wearing the ill-advised garment herself. Husbands were ultimately blamed for such errors as they choose the cloth for their wives.

Emphasis is placed upon the correct width and length of sleeve, the length of the blouse front (which must cover the pubic area to be decent), the length of skirt itself (which must not show too much ankle, but must not trail on the floor).

Before starting work in the village, I was advised by non-Kutchi and by Kutchi men never to wear Kutchi clothes outside the village or in towns for fear of minor violence and discrimination by Moslems. Whereas Scheduled Caste women wearing their own clothes were either treated with distaste or ignored, it was found not to be the same for a white woman choosing to wear Hindu clothes.

Thus, in the village, I wore Kutchi clothes, but travelling and in towns, I wore shalwar-chemise. The Kutchi men approved of this and were quite happy for me to do so, seeing the sense in it. The women,

on the other hand, were very different; complaining about the ugliness of my "other clothes", saying that they were inferior Sindi garments, that they did not suit me, and that they, the women, did not like them at all. When later we had the use of an old motor-bike, they used to then justify my wearing of them, because "they saved my proper ones from becoming spoilt."

Although the men also mentioned latterly that they liked me wearing Kutchi clothes "in the village", they obviously preferred me wearing shalwar-chemise in town, where they could quite relaxedly stop and talk to my husband when I was present. On the few occasions that I travelled in Kutchi clothes with veil down, they were nervous and apprehensive; thinking it a mistake. In shalwar-chemise, they knew that I would be treated with more respect, being of a "high" caste, and that correspondingly I would bring less attention to themselves. At the beginning of fieldwork, when visiting other villages, it also provided a form of honorary male status, where I was permitted to play cards and drink if I wore shalwar-chemise, but not if I was in Kutchi clothes. The wearing of shalwar- chemise distanced me from the Kutchi women however, and they refused to relate to me when I was wearing them and so mostly I did not.

Once, while attending a wedding in another village, a young married woman now settled in the eastern desert regions arrived wearing a skirt made of nylon embroidered cloth with a border. This cloth was normally made into blouses for the women in the host locality, and therefore was very unpopular amongst the women as a skirt.

It may be expensive, but we do not like it. We have only two types of cloth for skirts; flowered or striped of specific colours and patterns. That skirt seems low caste to us. It looks like Bhil or Meghvar. Apart from her blouse, she does not look like a Kori at all.

In the desert areas, however, where there are few Kutchi and more people from other ethnic groups, the women had apparently recently adopted such skirts.

Similarly, amongst the Kutchi Koli living in Karachi, the women would sometimes wear such skirts and short blouses. These elicited equal disapproval where I was conducting research:

The vests/tops Kutchi girls wear in Karachi are tight and show their stomachs. It is disgusting.

The men were more amused by variations in the female style of clothing than anything else.

Mostly, women's clothes are used to create distinctions between groups, at least as much as to emphasise internal solidarity.

Bhil and Meghvar are below us; we do not eat or drink with them. It is the same in Hindustan (India). Bhil can make skirts out of material that we would only use for blouses. We have our own special skirt fabrics.

The Mayvasi Koli are low caste. We do not eat theirs. Their women's garments do not cover their stomachs properly. They only cover their chest, and their stomachs; backs and arms are naked. We may have our backs naked, but we pull our veil round to cover them. They do not, but strut around half-naked. They are rude people.

Most young married Kutchi women these days wear vests beneath their blouses, unless breast-feeding. The men see this as an important advance and they have become integrated into the traditional uniform by the women. In my opinion, this is chiefly a response to the Moslem emphasis upon female bodily concealment. Perhaps it is now also used as a further element of distancing from other Hindu groups, similar to the above.

Clothing can be used to demonstrate proximity with the high castes: The Mathiwara used to be a numerous caste here, but now they have all left for Hindustan. They are a high caste. Higher than Brahmans. They are tenant farmers - poor things - and keep animals, or are landlord people. We eat theirs. Their women wore the same clothes as us. They wore beautiful blouses, with a silk/nylon vest on top; and only their hands and feet were ever allowed to show.

An old woman, when pressed, talked about the changed socio-economic climate in Sind"

Vania used to wear skirts. They had four yards of cloth in them. Like ours, but much smaller. Now, they have to wear shalwar-chemise (poor things), because the Sindi are in control."

In a similar vein, the women talk about the differences in marriage arrangements and avoidance practices between the social groups.

The Bhil only put a bit of cloth over their heads. The rest of the cloth is around their skirts. They avoid a lot of people; mother-in-law until first child, affinal men. The mother also avoids her son-in-law.

Meghvar avoid like we do; veil down in front of the husband's elder male kin.

Parkari avoid some people, but they hold their veil in a different way; they pull the sides to the front, just over the face, and hold it there with two hands.

Sindi do not veil as we do; they marry within their relations. If any man comes they avoid. Not within the family though.

3) FOOD

The third and most important category in which women are seen as being in control of ethnic purity is that of food and the ideology pertaining to it.

In general terms in earlier chapters, I have sketched the ways in which food is consumed within the household; the maintenance of distinctness between husband and wife, by way of temporal and spatial hierarchy. To elaborate upon this theme I will illustrate some of the differences in eating habits between men and women in this society.

When men are eating together, they sit relatively formally on mats in a circle on the floor or upon beds. They each have a bowl of curry, and a basket of chapatti is placed between them. Whenever required, they politely reach for a piece of chapatti with the right hand, deftly tearing one of appropriate size; big enough to satisfy their curry needs for a time, but not too large thereby denoting greed. Hands are washed before and after by a boy bearing a jug and

a glass of water. With a meal of rice, the proceedings are much the same, if perhaps still more individualistic.

The customs of a female group defining its own behaviour are very different from the above. They sit huddled around the cooking area in a group but one that is less obviously marked than that of the men, with some stragglers here and there and no definite time of starting. They rarely wash their hands before a meal but usually go to the nearest pump afterwards to wash. They may share a large communal dish of curry, scrape out the cooking pots, or eat chutney, a green pepper, or raw fruit or vegetable with their chapatti.

Their method of eating chapatti is also radically different from that of the men. They will clutch a whole chapatti in the left hand, tearing it into small pieces with the right. The women and children mostly receive the curry juice, vegetables and meat pieces going largely to the men and boys. The women therefore deposit all their chapatti pieces into the curry bowl, work it all into a mush with the fingers of the right hand, and then scoop it haphazardly into their mouths. There is little decorum or politeness about female eating; no patience or restraint in terms of the turns of others. There is little talk throughout the meal which is also true amongst the men. The women may, however, pause to shout at the children, mouths crammed with food. When finished, they rise and go, taking their individual plates to be rinsed. Others may come and help themselves after the bulk have started.

Children help themselves from whoever's plate or pot they wish. They will do this from their father's too. If older, they may sit with their own plate in a corner with siblings.

On festive occasions, where women are served before men and after the children, there is slightly more formality in the proceedings, in that they are public and observable. Nevertheless, the women rarely wash their hands first and the object of the exercise is to cram as much of the luxury food into their stomachs in the shortest space of

time. Here, they enjoy the role reversal situation and the possibility of demanding from the men more food and attention.

Apart from the above festive occasions and the occasional times that the household head wants to cook luxury food for his family, women cook. They also make the offering for the husband's zach goddess. This, they are not ideally allowed to taste first, but many do. In general, men frown upon the idea of women tasting food before men eat it, but they pretend that it is not happening. It is in fact common practice for a woman to dip the spoon into the cooking curry, to pour a little of the substance from the spoon onto her hand, and then to lick her hand. To drink from the spoon itself is perceived as very impure; an inferior having contaminated the substance of a superior.

The curry is always cooked first, and left to bubble on the coals whilst the chapatti are being prepared. Women express much greater need for chapatti than do men. It is deemed essential to have them twice per day, unless in exceptional circumstances, such as weddings, where rice is served. There, they will allow themselves one meal of rice but they will insist upon having chapatti for the next one. Men, on the other hand, often "risk" having two meals of rice in a row at weddings.

Women may not take life in order to eat it. All killings of goats and chickens have to be performed by men who, as we have seen, are reluctant about it. The unfortunate, persuaded man will take the creature to somewhere private to cut its throat and to drain out as much blood as possible. Then, he will skin it, before hacking it to pieces.

It is then generally taken to the woman of the house who will boil it in water initially to ensure that it is totally pure from blood, draining all the liquid away before making the curry. It need not always be the women who cook meat dishes though. Many do not like doing it and refuse. In other cases, men like to make it themselves as

it is always considered a special food for some occasion. (Alcohol is often consumed with either meat or fish and, generally speaking, if the latter are seen being cooked, one can presume that the household has a bottle ready.)

Some women refuse to use a knife that has killed or cut an animal for the preparation of vegetables. They feel that the latter will be contaminated by the impurity of the blood. This is true mainly amongst vegetarian women.

As mentioned in chapter three there are no taboos about cooking during menstruation, only after childbirth.

In general, amongst the Kutchi themselves as a definite and circumscribed group, there is little worry about or emphasis upon purity and no rituals surrounding the preparation or consumption of food.

When it is a matter of inter-caste eating habits, the question is however perceived completely differently, especially amongst the women. Food and clothing can thus both be seen as symbols designed to preserve the group's identity vis-a-vis other groups.

For men, things are not so simple, if only in terms of the Moslem groups whom they recognise as formally dominant, politically and economically. For the "lower" groups, as shall be seen, both men and women adhere to the same principles, although men are more sympathetic in practice. This accords with their experience of the outside world, where caste is generally more of a problem than a cause for pride, at least in the present socio-economic climate.

A generation prior to the oldest people living in the village, the Kutchi had eaten buffalo. This was discovered halfway through the fieldwork period and completely by accident, because a middle-aged man was baiting his old mother-in-law about caste pride. In addition to

this, another very old woman later admitted to the former practice. It was however, a very well preserved group secret; something never to be talked about or accepted. In terms of their traditions, they wanted outsiders and their own younger generations to believe that buffalo had always been venerated and left unconsumed and that this was an integral part of their belief system. This may have been a means whereby Kutchi in the past distinguished themselves from other groups and emphasised their "superior" status. It is certainly currently used as an important reference point and badge of identity in discussions of other groups, including the Sindi.

In these, they stress the lowliness of Bhil, Parkari, Meghvar and Sindi because of eating mota gosht (big meat, buffalo, cow). "The very animals that give them milk." To this is added the further dimension of carrion in popular belief:

Meghvar, Parkari, Sindi and Bhil are all low caste. We keep dishes for their use separate on the top of the house wall. The lowest are the Meghvar, they eat carrion.

They all eat carrion. I've seen animals killed by vehicles on the road and Bhil and Parkari have come to take them away. (Old man.)

If an animal is killed by having its throat slit, then we can eat it. But if it dies not by our hands, then we cannot. But they do.

But opinion differs in the way Sindi are regarded in these terms; and as to whether the eating of mota gosht or carrion is worst, there was never a definite response given.

Parkari and Bhil are below us. They eat mota gosht. They even eat "dead" animals. Sindi do not even eat "dead" animals!

Before when the Vania were here, they would not let the Sindi kill mota gosht. Now they kill whenever they want to.

We do not eat with Meghvar. They are very much below us. You see, they take hide off animals. If they mend our shoes, we get someone to throw pure water over us before we can walk away in them. You see, we do not even touch them, otherwise water has to be thrown on us. We give them chapatti into their plates from above, without even touching. It is because they eat animals that have been dead for four days you see.

This shows itself in their treatment of the various castes, with specific differences between male and female ideas.

All Kutchi houses have old cracked cups and glasses at the top of the house wall. These are to be used if people from other groups require refreshment. The whole procedure rarely takes place however, as the village is relatively encapsulated. Members of other groups do not drift into the village and require tea or food actually made for them by the Kutchi. Inter-group visiting is rare and those that do come are either sellers or beggars and usually only receive money. In cases where perhaps someone does require to be given something, Kutchi women will panic and generally delay inhospitably long, in the hope that it will eventually become someone else's responsibility. These cups and dishes are therefore hardly ever used.

A Christian Bhil woman did occasionally come to the village accompanying a white woman missionary. At first the women were too embarrassed to make anything for them. On later visits black tea was made, the refusal to give them milk emphasising their low status in the eyes of the women and was served to them both in the cracked cups from the wall. These cups were not initially washed, but only wiped with the corner of a veil and a finger of the left hand; still more insulting, and not passing unnoticed by the Bhil woman. The tea was poured from the cooking pot into a brass bowl, which mediated it, and therefore prevented contamination of the rest of their utensils.

On another occasion, when a low caste Sindi woman wanted some pump water, a Kutchi woman from the other side of the village embarrassedly ushered her to the nominally Christian hamlet. Here, the women were equally reluctant to let her drink, but did so eventually, ensuring that she bodily did not touch the pump, and muttering all the while, "What is wrong with canal water anyway?"

When low caste Sindi men with donkeys were all day removing manure from behind the houses, they asked the women for some milk with which to make their tea. They were refused it.

Generally, the women used to emphasise the preferability of lower castes providing their own cups and dishes. This saved using the cracked ones, and was more in keeping with their ideas of caste purity. On the other hand, other groups, such as the Bhil and Parkari, exemplified their own degree of caste pride by refusing to acknowledge (or disbelieving) their "inferior" status, and not bringing their own containers.

Once in the fields, some Parkari were working for cash for a Kutchi landlord, weeding some vegetables. An understood "payment" in the culture is also a cup of tea, provided by the employer's wife. The latter brought a pot out to the fields at midday and the Kutchi present drank theirs. Next, she yelled to the Parkari to come and have tea and to bring their cups. The Parkari obviously wanted some tea after working in the hot sun, but refused on principle, not having brought their own cups, as they did not perceive themselves as "lower" than the Kutchi. The result was stale-mate, both sides refusing to relent. The Parkari were left tealess and the Kutchi were left with too much tea - wasted, with no-one to drink it.

Men are much less firm on these matters and looked tempted to share their cups and tea; at least with the Parkari men. On one occasion when an old Bhil man was in the village, again accompanying some western and Kutchi Christians, the women insisted that he be given a separate low caste cup and that it was washed separately from all the others. The young men serving the tea and later washing the cups were very surprised, as they had been in the process of mixing them all in together.

Men are in this respect much more likely to take risks and to "turn a blind eye", unless something is made explicit and blatantly pointed out to them. Women feel that they have to emphasise their own position; because they actually "know" themselves to be superior to these groups; because they have no experience of relationships across group boundaries; and perhaps this is some sort of unconscious recompense for their own purity and status vis-a-vis men.

This is similarly the case in contacts with "higher" caste Sindi, which men generally attempt to cultivate and women do not.

In a nearby village, on a Hindu festive occasion, a neighbouring Sindi had come to Buro's home to obtain an alcoholic beverage. Buro managed to provide him with one with difficulty. All the women present were angry and upset that he was going to use a "good" glass for the Sindi. Buro's wife let the matter drop but the other women felt unable to do so for a long time afterwards.

Likewise, whenever Sindi landlords visit Kutchi villages, the men make a great fuss of them. (See also photograph 11) They are treated like royalty and much esteemed. Rich Kutchi men may put aside special cups for "high" caste Moslems or Christians; not ones they would ever drink out of themselves (except perhaps children), but visibly much superior in quality to the ones presented to "lower" castes. Important preparations are made for them in terms of procuring bottles of fizzy drinks and ice in case they refuse to accept Kutchi tea. Kutchi women are furious about this and it seems incomprehensible to them - "Why shouldn't they drink our tea?"

Once, when the men suggested that my husband and I make tea for them because we were "high" caste like the visitors, the women refused to let us and became very indignant:

Why should John and Sarah have to make tea for dirty Sindi?

This incomprehension and indignation was also very evident amongst women in two villages (one a "mixed" one) on the occasions of Ibrahim's visits. Ibrahim was a Moslem transvestite, with great knowledge of these Hindu groups' languages and customs, who made much money by going to villages at times of weddings and festivals, dancing and purportedly showering luck upon new-born infants. He was reputedly impotent and asexual and people gave happily out of their own fertility, good fortune, and relative poverty.

He brought all his own food and utensils wherever he went. He would then sit at a woman's hearth, preparing his meal, chatting in his

high-pitched voice and making the women delighted and amused by his attitude, his willing adoption of their role and many of the sexual gestures he made whilst kneading the flour. His practices would also amuse the men who would come into the house with phrases like - "Who is that strange woman there?" Despite wearing shalwar- chemise or perhaps because he was not dressed in female Kutchi clothes, Ibrahim was very much accepted and was treated by the men as an honoured guest.

Nevertheless, the women could not understand why he was cooking his own food when there was so much of theirs available - "Why don't you just eat!" They were perpetually trying to persuade him to accept the tea that they had made or the wedding rice meal. When they discovered that he would not, they were at first amazed and incredulous and later annoyed:

"He does not eat our rice!"

"Doesn't he eat out of our dishes?"

The men did not find this at all difficult or surprising to accept however and were generally quiet and good-humoured about it all, resigned to the nature of things. One woman who had lived for a while outside the village situation with a mixture of ethnic groups, tried to explain things to the other women, embarrassedly and impatiently:

"How can he eat out of our plates."

All this illustrates a fairly marked difference between the attitudes of women in caste situations and those of the men. To a great extent, men are resigned to the opinions of the outside world, even if they do not go so far as to accept them. They do not return home and discuss such status-linked and demeaning matters with their womenfolk. They prefer to maintain a semblance of dignity, strength and superiority in their own domain.

Thus, women do not realise many of the external implications of their own position, until on the rare occasions when they are confronted with them. Even in the latter, they do not integrate

these aspects into their own cosmology; defining them as idiosyncratic or extraordinary happenings, and preventing them from interfering with the basic stability of their own system of identity. Sometimes, the old women, who have experienced a different past, may be prevailed upon to express alternative perceptions of reality; yet even they usually only tell part of the story.

Before, Hindus used to be in control here. Now that the countries are separate the Sindi are in charge, and so Kutchi eat with them sometimes, with the same utensils.

Men speak more frankly about the practicalities of the situation, yet still stress the principle of not eating Moslem food:

Sindi are below us. They eat mota gosht. They think that they are above us, but it all boils down to the fact that it is their country now. Before, it was always Hindu/Musalman, and not Musalman/Hindu. Pathan, Baluchi and Punjabi are all Sindi. We do not eat their food.

This is also true in situations external to the village. Men emphasise the principles of caste but are much more adaptive in practice. They are resigned to the political situation and seek to better their own individual positions in relation to it. Thus, men can be seen to drink from Sindi glasses at an all-male mera (carnival).

"It is a mera. No-one bothers at a mera."

They talk among themselves of the possibility of accepting "high" caste Sindi food and drink or even perhaps unintentionally "low" caste products in towns. Some men seem more resigned about this than others and are prepared to speak about it relatively happily. Others still maintain concern about the traditional consequences. Below, I report a conversation heard on this topic between three men.

Ramshi - Look at you! How can you say that you do not eat with Bhil? When you are in town, don't you buy sweetmeats? Who do you think makes them, and what do you think they make them from?

Lakshman - Yes, I know these town's people's methods. I tell you, half of their ghi is dalda (vegetable fat), and half is animal fat.

Munzi - Animal fat!

Ramshi - Yes, when you kill a cow, you get at least three litres of animal fat from it.

Lakshman - And when you are in town, do you ever eat pecora? Do you think that there is a special Kutchi Koli at the bus station just to make pecora for you? No, it is a Punjabi who makes them."

Ramshi - And don't you drink water in the Koli "hotels"? Whose pump does that come from then?

Munzi - Well, perhaps you are right, but I say that as long as you do not eat what you see to be of another caste, that is all that matters.

Ramshi - Listen to yourself. Does what you are saying make any sense to you? How can you be so silly?

Munzi - I know, but it is our custom not to eat with the low castes, is it not? That is why we cannot do so.

Lakshman - Times are changed. Days of respecting caste are disappearing now.

This may be beginning to sound more of an attractive argument to the men who bear the brunt of discrimination and prejudice. Women do not see the political expediency of adaptation. They are very proud of their own identity, believe in its maintenance, and enjoy caste; chiefly because they do not recognise anyone else as being superior, except their own menfolk.

In large enough towns with sufficient proportion of Hindu people, the men have their own teashops. Here they can meet and relax with others from their specific group living in different districts. They are perceived as preferable to having refreshment elsewhere where the Sindi serve them in out-caste cups and plates. In this way, the shops can be seen both as emphasising solidarity and also as a response to discriminatory external attitudes. Women are not permitted to enter and usually sit on the ground outside. The women are proud of their existence however, do not define them as demeaning, but as intrinsically "good", and identify with their men drinking there.

Some old women in the village used to mutter about the lack of purity in the teashops, where apparently the cups would simply be dipped in a pail of water and then given to someone else. This was to emphasise the contrast of the village however where the same women

claimed that things were washed at least three times before serving to someone else.

Yet the women recognise the towns to be uncontrollable, uncategorised places. Here people may unwittingly eat things made by another group; taboos around childbirth may be dropped in a town hospital; and "real" Kutchi emotions such as joy and weeping must be suppressed at all costs. There is a common belief in the dirtiness of townsfolk; their impurity and insanitary habits, and their general level of immorality.

Women were the sex to place more emphasis on the above. They were also the ones who were perpetually concerned about matters of eating and caste. One family sent its six year old twin boys to a Christian hostel so that they could attend a nearby school. When the twins returned, the women spent a long time checking whether any "low" caste boys attended there, in case the twins had had to eat with them. The twins tactfully denied their presence.

The women were also very worried about our own habits; checking that we never ate with Sindi or the low castes; saying that if we ever did, we could not drink out of their cups again; and always emphasising the dirtiness, impurity and distance of other groups. Towards the end of fieldwork, their indoctrination and small group pressure had been so complete that I was shocked to notice my own reactions to the Bhil family who lived at the village entrance. I did not want to approach them, feeling their "dirt" to be somehow contagious. I was experiencing a very real sense of distaste and actual dislike. It took conscious effort on my part to overcome this. Yet I had the will and presumably an earlier background ideology of human equality.

The men never mentioned whom we ate with and would eat our food and drink our tea from the first. Women took very much longer to partake in anything we had made, giving it straight to the children for the first few months.

In general, it was the women who had a much purer diet in Kutchi terms. Perhaps because they were deemed to need more purification, perhaps because of domestic economics and politics. Their food also signified weakness. They had a more vegetarian diet than the men with very little goat or chicken. Many women chose not to have any meat at all, preferring to cook vegetables for themselves. Others, although fewer in number, complained that they never received enough meat. Meat, milk and ghi were accepted as predominantly male items of food. Men were perceived as justified in having cravings for meat and in their daily milk. This resembles the double standard about sex that was described in chapter four. Women define male desires as weak but to be expected and accepted. Their own ability to do without was defined as a form of strength and ascetism.

The diet of the women thus corresponds closely to that of the bhagat who has turned away from all pleasures of the flesh, is a vegetarian, does not smoke, and does not drink. In women's case, such a diet is not perceived to be pure, but weak in the eyes of the men, in contrast to their own strength-giving diet.

The currently increasing number of vegetarians seemed a surprise even to the Kutchi themselves and was freely admitted. Many more women than men appeared to have become so and would even refuse goat at wedding feasts. Some claimed that it affected their stomachs; others treated it as a matter of pride that they did not eat goat. Most had done so in the past.

Perhaps here there is another element of "up-casteing" in evidence. Many Bhil are now saying that they do not eat buffalo, to distinguish themselves from the Sindi, and to emphasise their own Sanskritic nature. Possibly the Kutchi now feel unconsciously that they need a further symbol to mark their distinctiveness and discrete superior identity. (See also Cohen, A. 1969)

Or perhaps the equation of eating a creature and drinking its milk had become too much of an important issue for them. Certainly, they never liked this to be made explicit, and many of those who ate goat would refuse goat's milk and vice versa.

The Bhil who lived in a tiny but increasing community at the village entrance did not share hospitality with the Kutchi. In many ways, they were a source of tension. The patel employed them to work on his fields instead of using kin and becoming involved in long-term contracts. (He had many young sons, and wanted to retain the land for them.)

The Bhil were resented by the patel's kin because of this . Their children were abused by Kutchi children and they themselves were not made welcome at Kutchi rituals and festivals. People complained of the patel's love of Bhil and they were generally felt to be inferior, dirty, immoral, and not to be spoken to. (Hence my earlier described reaction.) There were problems when they attempted to use the village shops where they were generally treated badly, much worse than the Sindi, who were to a greater extent welcomed.

A Bhil child once approached a group of Kutchi sitting in a mango orchard, begging for a mango. She was ignored for a long time, but later was reluctantly given one by a Kutchi woman, who explained apologetically that she could not do anything else, as it was for dharam (good works for one's own salvation).

Some Parkari workers settled in a temporary site outside the village for seasonal work but did not share anything in common with the Kutchi, as was evidenced earlier in this part. (See photograph 12 of their settlement.)

CONCLUSION

Thus, although there may be an unadmitted movement through political expediency towards the Sindi, especially on the part of Kutchi men, there is no such movement towards the "low" Hindu castes. In fact, there are some new efforts towards distancing, especially on the part of the women.

As can be seen from the data, the women play the major part in preserving ethnic identity and purity. They keep themselves aloof from other groups in terms of clothes, language, caste ideology, food, utensils, and taboo. This is seen as women's province and plays a large part in the composition of their identity. They stress who they are at the expense of who they are not.

Men rarely mention or wield such symbols. They have to deal with the outside world and therefore have to be more careful. Nevertheless, they adhere to the same principles as the women, so that it is more a matter of degree than of kind.

When one young man's wife had done everything possible to rebel against the community and had succeeded in gaining the disapproval and hatred of all the women, her husband knew what to do to improve her position. He was well aware of the symbols and values of the female group. He simply said that his wife was so terrible that he wished that he was married to a Sindi woman instead. At this, all the women were aghast and eager to dissuade him - "Not that, Nilo. Not a Sindi. No Kutchi could be as bad as that. Your wife is not so terrible really."

Differences between the sexes can again be seen as an expression of their relation to the outside world and their access to an alternative "reality". Men as mediators, increasingly adopt other symbols and forms of adaptation. (Cohen, A. 1969). Caste is basically a disadvantage to them and so they do not stress it. To women it is an important identity-source and must be upheld at all costs.

Women thus tend to blame Sindi neighbours for many things that go wrong; for stealing, for spoiling crops and upsetting women. Men, on the other hand, often deny that it is the Sindi, preferring instead to blame "lower" caste Hindus, who can pose no threat to them economically, politically or ideologically. Women, living in an encapsulated, historical world, find that a fundamental part of their reality consists in opposing Sindi. Men seek to avoid such conflict.

PART THREE: WOMEN AS MODELS FOR COMPARISON

Introduction.

1) Sind.

2) Gujarat.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

This part will involve many of the themes introduced in the last section. In it, I will give unfortunately brief contrasts to the lives of the Kutchi women in the host village, by means of some Indian Kutchi ethnography, other Pakistani Kutchi ethnography, and that of a Meghvar family. Its association with the last section is strong in terms of the concepts of identity, pride, disgust, and distinctiveness. Some of the comparisons show similarities with the group of Kutchi I lived amongst. Others show marked differences.

Despite its limitations in terms of depth, I feel this to be an important part. Towards the end of my fieldwork, when I had gained a fuller grasp of Kutchi beliefs, I felt my lack of knowledge of other groups for comparative purposes. In some ways intuitively, I had the feeling that women in these groups were operating in the same way and with the same principles. Any meetings at all with women from other groups which were very difficult for me to establish whilst living amongst the Kutchi, (for reasons which have become apparent throughout this text), were thus deemed important to add background flesh to the isolated Kutchi of the study.

1) SIND

In the last part, I introduced the position of Kutchi women in a neighbouring "mixed" village. Here, they were generally poorer as they all worked for a Sindi landlord and did not own their own land. Although the women exhibited the same elements of caste pride - not understanding why Ibrahim would not eat "their" food and objecting to a Sindi being given a "good" glass - they were nevertheless more conscious of Sindi, and they played a greater part in the Kutchi world-view. Most of the women spoke some Sindhi and had acquired a knowledge of Sindi rituals and festivals.

The women may have been derogatory about them behind their backs, but to their faces they knew it tactful to be polite. Still expressing distaste as to Sindi habits and attitudes, they thought of the men as being less of an actual threat in terms of the taking of women. They were therefore less concerned about leaving the village in groups to work, although it was a question of degree and the anxiety was by no means absent. Men would say that they could be apparently very good friends with Sindi men for years and years but still not trust them with their women.

The women here, although still in control of their own rituals and responsible for the maintenance of ethnic identity, had developed a lower self-esteem in terms of external values. They talked more about, were more aware of, and more resigned to, their dependence upon outside forces for money, goods, and well-being. Coming into more frequent contact, they were also aware of the other group's perceptions of themselves. They knew that the Kutchi were regarded as lowly by the Sindi, and this had in some measure affected their own assurance and confidence.

Thus, they had come across the possibility of an alternative perception of reality and although it had not by any means eroded their faith in themselves and their own traditional practices, it made

them more conscious of vulnerability, status and the arbitrariness of the world's categories.

I found similar attitudes amongst other women who no longer lived in a solidary isolated social group. The contrast was especially profound and fundamental where they were only living with their husbands and children. (This was not a frequent occurrence, but would occasionally take place if the husband was employed by a white family or had become a Christian evangelist.) In such cases the women expressed similar attitudes to their menfolk. They were all too aware of their lower status, their relative poverty, and the discriminatory manner in which they were treated. In fact, both men and women in such circumstances often appeared more anxious and ashamed than the men from the host village who could at least feel secure and superior within the village itself and who were given validation in this by their womenfolk.

The responses of the isolated Kutchi were generally to attempt to "up-caste" still further, denying their origins and adopting external symbols of wealth and prestige. They would thus learn to speak Urdu rather than Sindhi. The women would change from ethnic group dress to the sari, acknowledged externally as appropriate for high caste Hindus, Christians, and even Moslems on occasions. Specific Kutchi footwear and jewelry would be transformed into identity-free bangles and earrings.

Depending upon the years of practice and the context, they may sometimes be able to adopt these new roles satisfactorily, at least to escape notice when travelling or in towns. Generally speaking, however, they looked incongruous and uncomfortable, ill at ease in the new "uniform", yet simultaneously wanting to deny their roots. They would speak in an ambivalent way about the latter, stressing what they found preferable in Kutchi society - generally marriage and commensal requirements; but denigrating and distancing themselves from the Kutchi way of life - work, attitudes, relationships, and the intrinsic "dirtiness" of living "outside", and in the wilds.

Such detached and displaced persons amongst Bhil and Parkari groups followed a similar course but found it even harder than the Kutchi to demonstrate superiority in terms of new values and symbols.

Bhil women who traded in towns, selling cheap jewelry and artifacts, realised their low status in the perceptions of others. They nevertheless, retained a certain identity-pride by keeping themselves socially distinct, wearing Bhil jewelry and clothing and enjoying the support of other Bhil women and Bhil men in the market-place. These women benefit from the monetary rewards of their trade and associatedly enjoy a more equal relationship with their husbands, as has been reported in much of the literature, (Skjonsberg 1982; Baig 1958; Jacobson and Wadley 1977; amongst others.) Within the home itself however, such women are as subordinate to their menfolk and to older women as are the Kutchi. Bhil mothers veil in front of their daughters' husbands, and daughters-in-law must remain in silence if the mothers-in-law so desire.

My experience of the Meghvar was minimal. However on one occasion we were invited by a cobbler, who had a stall where the mud-track for the village joined the main road, to come and have a look at his ill wife. We went secretly, frightened to tell any of the Kutchi we lived amongst, for fear of the consequences. What follows is therefore only on an unfortunately superficial and descriptive level, based upon immediately apparent contrasts, gleaned from an afternoon spent with them.

Firstly, we almost had to find out where he lived ourselves, as the local Sindi were very reluctant to tell us. As we approached their hut, built on to the back of a walled Sindi village, facing outwards in the opposite direction to theirs, he emerged to greet us and to guide us through the dogs.

They had six children, five girls and one boy, and his wife was pregnant at the time we visited. The younger girls wore dress tops,

and shalwar trousers, like the young Kutchi girls. Older ones wore a tighter, vest-type top, resembling those I had observed being worn amongst tribal teenage girls in India. The skirts were made of different materials from the Kutchi, with a narrow frill round the foot.

The husband emphasised the length of his wife's skirt with pride; saying that whereas Kutchi women reveal their ankle bones, Meghvar women do not. (This illustrates a similar attitude to that expressed amongst the Kutchi, in terms of pride in the caste's clothes and symbols.) The woman's blouse was of the same style as that of the Kutchi, but with less elaborate border stitching. Her veil was of the Bhil-type, with pastel-coloured nylon trimming stitched around the front edge.

The jewelry was as usual another identifying feature. She wore Meghvar-type anklets, which jingle when one walks. At the time she was wearing nothing in her ear-lobes but the large hole was present to fit either Kutchi or Bhil- style pokundrium (spool-like inserted ear decoration). She wore the bone bangles worn by some of the Kutchi zach not the Bhil-type of bone bangles which are worn as far as the upper arm. Her vedla (dangling earrings) resembled those of the Kutchi, except that the lower part was rounded rather than hexagonal.

The relationship between husband and wife seemed more equal than amongst the Kutchi but this may have been this specific partnership rather than the group's norm. She smoked as many cigarettes as he did and obviously felt free to interrupt the conversation whenever she wanted. When my husband and I were given a buttermilk drink, we were served simultaneously which would never happen in Kutchi villages. Pump water was presented to me first by the woman, as opposed to the husbands which would have been the Kutchi way. (This would have been so amongst the Kutchi even if I had been wearing shalwar-chemise, which I was on this occasion.)

The house was similar in shape, design, and content to those inhabited by the Kutchi and many other groups in rural Sind. They possessed many obvious symbols of wealth; containers, cushions, shelves and beds. They also had many animals, for which the husband was continually praising Bhagvan (the Supreme Deity).

Embarrassedly, preparing to retract instantly if met by our rebuff or refusal, they offered tea. We having responded in the affirmative, they then sent a young son to bring some for us from the Sindi teashop. (They were obviously conscious of the fact that "our" villagers would refuse to drink or eat with us if they discovered that we had been drinking tea actually made by Meghvar. Nor is this the type of thing that it is possible to keep secret. The villagers would probably have known before we returned there a few hours later.)

The tea arrived back in a pot, for the "white guests", with two cups and saucers. We had one cup each. Then the wife washed them and she and her husband had a cup each. (The teashop would have been askance if they had realised that their "good" cups, had been used by Meghvar, instead of simply the whites for whom they had been intended.)

In the carefree, proud way in which they performed this, the Meghvar were showing as much scorn for the beliefs and attitudes of other groups as I had seen the Kutchi do in similar circumstances. They were also illustrating the pride and support they felt for their own ethnic group and its values.

During the time that we spent there, they emphasised the superiority of Hindu beliefs in opposition to those of the Moslems and portrayed little doubt in this area.

2) GUJARAT

The following comparative example, derives from a few days spent in Gujarat, India, in a Kutchi Koli village there, near Rhadhanpur.

Again the contrasts are unfortunately superficial and are based upon immediately noticeable social facts and personal experience, rather than extensive participation and questioning.

The visit was undertaken for social reasons, to show gratitude to the Pakistani Kutchi with whom we had been living, rather than for the collection of data. These Indian Kutchi had been living in Sind before partition. Other groups of Kutchi Koli had always been settled on the Indian side of the border. (Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity or the time to make any contact with them, which would probably have proved extremely interesting and beneficial.)

At the time of Partition itself, whole Kutchi families in Sind had become separated. Rumours had abounded that they were to be killed by the Moslems as the territory in which they were living was to become part of the new Moslem state of Pakistan. Some had therefore decided to flee over the border before it was too late, intending to return when the troubles were finished. Others opted to remain in Sind, deciding that they had been settled there for too long and that with the irrigation canals the land would be more fertile. The latter was probably the best choice on purely economic grounds. However, the Kutchi of Sind still do not describe it as their home. Their allegiance has remained with their Indian origins and it is often voiced, especially by the women, that they belong to Hindustan and that Pakistan is just the land of Moslems.

The Kutchi who fled were given land by the Indian Government, but it was poor and lacked irrigation. There, they built their homes and almost learned to forget the possibility of returning to Sind; impoverished and lacking passports as they are.

We visited Arjan's wife's mother's sister in this village, bearing news from the Pakistani side and rich cloth from her sister to make her a blouse - the latter proving the envy of the neighbourhood.

The village land had been the site of an old temple or monastery and the villagers had managed to excavate great lumps of stone and pillars from the ground with which to construct their houses. On initial sight therefore, it was very impressive. Inside, however, the houses were poor and sparsely furnished. The people looked thinner and less healthy, and their clothes were older and of inferior quality to the ones worn in Sind.

The striped cloth used for the formal variety of skirts in Sind, was not available in India. The blouses worn by girls in Sind - zuleri - were only worn by the Indian Kutchi after the habkan (engagement), when they also started to wear their nose-rings. Prior to this, the young girls wore the tight-fitting tops worn by the Bhil, Meghvar and Parkari and regarded as so inferior by the Kutchi in Sind. Nylon fabrics, so popular and fashionable in Sind, were apparently too expensive for the Indian Kutchi. There also seemed to be no specific widow's blouse or veil.

They complained frequently and bitterly as to the lack of water, having to fetch drinking water from a great distance and not having sufficient for the fields. They reminisced nostalgically of the life in Sind, some women in tears. Despite owning their fields, they found it impossible to earn a livelihood from them and therefore had to seek employment on the distant fields of others. When we stayed in the village in March, over half the population was away working and this necessitated travelling and absence for days at a time. The Kutchi were ashamed of this and initially would not admit this work.

Apparently, they can only succeed in growing crops in their winter wet season and so they hold their weddings later in the year, as by then it is their "money season". Thus, they have a different ritual

cycle from that of the Kutchi in Sind, where marriages occur in the cold season.

During the time we were there they were commencing the wedding songs for a girl to be married at the beginning of the hot season. The women obviously delighted in these songs, as they had procured a drum and dancing continued well into the night. (This will be seen in the next part to be somewhat different from the rituals which now take place in Sind, where dancing is disapproved of as promiscuous behaviour.) Seemingly, only the Kutchi refugees from Sind intermarry. They do not marry with those Kutchi Koli who have throughout been domiciled in India.

In general, the people seemed more involved in the caste structure and displayed more adherence to the beliefs of village Hindus. There were more elaborate shrines with more attention being paid to them by way of recent elaborate decoration, burning incense and ghi, and depictions of the appropriate gods and goddesses.

Outside one house, there was some coconuts and a bag containing cloth hanging on a rope as an offering to their mata (goddess). I did not see this form of offering in Sind.

In response to questioning and in talking about their beliefs, they appeared to have more knowledge as to the whys and wherefores than Kutchi in Sind. This confidence probably resulted from closer contact with other Hindus in a basically more Hindu social environment. For example, I was told in no uncertain terms that here they burned their dead, that burial was a Moslem practice. (The latter has been adopted by the Kutchi in Sind.)

Similarly, in terms of the caste system, they were unusually (to us, after the Sind Kutchi experience) frank about admitting which castes were above them; Rubari, Brahmans and others, saying that Kutchi could eat their food but not vice versa. They said that Bhil and Parkari are below them. Moslems did not even seem to enter their conception of

things, there being no possibility of Kutchi ever being able to eat with them. (This is again very different from the situation in Sind.)

I was surprised by the fact that men from higher castes could wander into the village, seemingly whenever they felt like it. Chiefly, on this occasion, they were there to make enquiries about our presence, but it was obvious that they often came for different reasons. They sat wherever they wanted, usually in the most prestigious positions, watching and questioning but of course not accepting hospitality. The Kutchi were not surprised by their presence and acted resignedly to it, nevertheless visibly anxious and ill at ease.

This is very different from the situation in Sind, where people rarely come into the village. Being more isolated and encapsulated, strangers are either exceptions of the lower caste variety or else invited guests. .

The Kutchi women in India also seemed to have more contact with the women from other groups, talking to them happily and accepting more of a co-existence, rather than being caught in a culturally isolated situation.

Another aspect of contrast and a re-emphasis of their attitude towards the caste structure occurred when no-one, not even the women, could believe initially that we would eat their food. They stressed our "high" caste nature and their own subservient position and generally required much convincing, before finally reluctantly accepting that we might eat Kutchi food in Sind. Nevertheless, a man was brought to cut the vegetables for our curry and I was persuaded, despite my protestations, to cut the onion we would be eating raw.

Their general diet appeared lower than that of the Kutchi in Sind in terms of tea and staples. They also seemed to eat less meat, but this may again have been on account of the generally more Hindu environment.

In terms of Indian Governmental social services they appeared better served however. They were in the process of building a school in the village for the young boys. They also had their houses numbered for mail and for insecticide spraying - to deter the mosquito population.

Although self-admittedly poorer, lacking water, and nostalgic for Sind, all stressed that this country was better for women and safer in general; how women could go out unaccompanied - girls too, and no-one would touch them, or call them anything; how if they required anything they could easily go to Radhanpur town; how in Pakistan even men are frightened to go out at night but in India there are no worries at anytime; the dogs do not need to bite and the people do not require high walls and fences.

(I personally could validate their statements. The freedom that I experienced as a woman in India was impressive compared to Pakistan.)

Perhaps connectedly, the women talked more of women who had run away with other men and I received the distinct impression of more incidences of broken marriages. With more possibility of external contacts and more general freedom, possibly the women have taken advantage of this in terms of finding their own more compatible mates. In this respect, they may be more conformist with the reported pattern of "promiscuous", "freer" tribal women in India (see Sachchidananda 1978; Carstairs 1957), rather than the closely guarded and bounded sex they have become in predominantly Moslem Sind, where the culture totally militates against such attachments.

In terms of the Indian Kutchi women's status vis-a-vis their men, there appeared to be no significant difference from the Sindi Kutchi, given that I was experiencing them in a relatively formal situation.

For both sexes leaving the village more and having contacts with other groups has evidently strengthened their Hindu perspective and perceptions of caste and of their own concomitant low status. Also,

this status is seemingly accepted and treated without comment or discrimination by outsiders, despite its lowly nature. Both men and women, have thus been exposed to both ideology and practice and have internalised them.

As we have seen, a very different situation transpires in Sind, where the Kutchi are more isolated and threatened, especially in terms of the women. The latter thus have few contacts with the outside and have an inflated idea of their own status and position vis-a-vis other groups. Men experience discrimination, but shelter this from the women. Perhaps in response to this pressure, the men are attempting to change many of their traditional attitudes and practices in order that they conform to, or are in less direct conflict with, the dominant political, religious and economic values of the Moslems.

Once back in Sind, I found the respective views of the sexes very interesting. These views also tended to confirm the suggestions made in the first part of the chapter as to women's attitudes to their own environment in opposition to the external society.

Men were interested to know where we had been, whom we had met, and what we had seen. Women were basically only interested in what we had brought back. For a long time, I attempted to elicit the latter's reactions on the subject of the alternative values I had seen working in India. Anything extreme was either ignored or treated with embarrassment.

For example, they disliked knowing that the Indian Kutchi still burned their dead but were poorer. (The latter was often used as the excuse for no longer burning in Sind.) Nor did they like to know about the members of different castes I had met; the older women eventually and very reluctantly admitting that perhaps some of these groups were "higher". Nor did they like to hear that Kutchi girls wore tight-fitting tops until their habkan or that the jewelry was not all transferred at the wedding (as in Sind), but at different ceremonial stages.

At first, they tried to claim that we had been visiting different people, that they were not Kutchi at all. When I gave the proper zach names, one woman annoyedly admitted:

People pick up customs of places they go to. That is why they have become separate, by picking up Indian habits.

(And trying to brush aside the jewelry threat:)

Well, what of it! We find it easier these days to give everything at once. It saves bother, that is all.

CONCLUSION

These comparisons have thus illustrated and emphasised several interesting features of the Kutchi women in the host village. It would seem that the specific set of economic, political and social factors in rural Sind have significantly affected the beliefs and values of the Kutchi Koli domiciled there. What concerns this thesis is the ways in which the female group specifically has been affected.

Within a Moslem culture, where one of the predominant values is the seclusion of women, Kutchi women have found themselves increasingly encapsulated and dependent totally upon an image of the outside, filtered by means of their menfolk. This has prevented them from devaluing their own society because they do not view it in the same jaundiced and prejudiced terms as do others. Instead, they retain a mytho-historical impression of the past, where their allegiance is with India, and the high caste Hindus.

As we have seen however, the situation in Sind is undergoing a fairly fundamental change. This may so far appear imperceptible to the women and yet they do not like to be reminded of possible incongruences and errors in world-view, as was seen at the close of this section. Their probably unconscious aim lies in the retention of their secure image and uncategorised news from the outside can appear a sudden threat.

The situation was seen to be different amongst the other female groups here described. They have all, to a greater or lesser extent, had to come to terms with discrepancies and devaluations of their life-style and world-view. How they have succeeded, or not, in attempting to do this, and in redefining their value- system, has scarcely been touched upon here. It would make interesting further study.

Introduction.

1) History.

2) Ritual.

3) Wealth.

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

This is the last section on women in external society and the last ethnographic part of the thesis. It focusses upon the self-admitted changes which have been taking place amongst the Kutchi Koli in recent years. It also attempts to surmise other changes, both from my own data and from external sources.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, from the data that has gone before, it appears that women are most resistant to change especially in terms of rituals and traditions, although perhaps to a lesser extent when it is a matter of individual or group manipulation to improve perceived status and prestige.

Men are the sex most evidently adopting change however, and certain aspects of this, will have become clear in earlier sections. This part attempts to draw strands together and present a more coherent picture of social change, as it was seen to be affecting the Kutchi Koli. Yet again, I must stress its superficiality; it was never intended as a main part of the study.

1) HISTORY

It has already been stated that the Kutchi and other Hindu peoples like them, were formerly nomadic but came to Sind because of the irrigation canals instigated by the British. Many settled in the area, but still had to move around searching for work. Old Kutchi will occasionally be prevailed upon to talk of their younger days and those of their ancestors. Younger people do not talk about such times although they may listen to the old people. They do not however, want to admit to their former poverty.

Not all that long ago, when my daughter Baya was all the family I had, we Kori were much poorer. Hardly any Kori had any land or tenancies, and those that had were considered fortunate. There was not much land to work, because of no water from the canals, and we earned what we could by mazduri (labouring). If a man could afford it, he would have a donkey for his children to ride on, and his wife would carry the household necessities; a pot for water, a kneading bowl, rolling board and pin, and a few dishes. We would spend one day in one village, and move on the next, asking where work could be found. The men would dig with their shovels, and we women would spend all day carrying dirt and building dams, so that we would be paid enough to afford wheat for chapatti. We had only the ground to sleep on. It was a hard life, and we died young. Most men did not live to be old men. The heights we had to climb while we were working.

At weddings then, no trunk was given. All you had was a bag made of cloth to put your stuff in, so that you could move about with it easily. Since the canals have been dug, we have been better off, as there has been much more land available. Now, landlords give leases even. Formerly, we were transient workers, like the Sindi you have seen come, or the Parkari who come sometimes. (Zati)

I went to India when I was young and unmarried. Those days we had to make our living from mazduri, or carrying earth in metal dishes on our heads. It was a hard time for Kori. Now with land and water everything has changed. (Old man)

In the old days we used to live in Tundi and we women would go and cut grass and weeds to sell in the market, such was our state. I tell you, in the old days in time of famine, we Kori used to eat even our own children, we were so hungry. (Old woman)

And when there was no water, we used to give our children ox urine to drink. What else could we do? We were dying of thirst. When I was young, there were no large numbers of us, as there are now. There were a couple of houses in Tundi, and maybe a couple of villages near Mirpurkhas. We earned our living by labouring. (Old man)

Yes, we did mazduri, lifting earth in metal dishes to clear the canals as they were being dug. Then, as the canals grew, so we grew in numbers. (Old woman)

When discussing such aspects of the past, there is always amongst old women the attitude of pride of the "self-made" person. For example, "Times were hard, but look at us now." Men are much quieter about this aspect of it, perhaps being outwardly more cynical, or probably feeling their "advancement" less keenly.

The Kutchi as a group most generally think of themselves in isolation. Other Scheduled Caste groups of those days are not mentioned and contrasted. There is slight mention of "high" caste Hindu groups, who fled for fear of Moslem domination. There are other tales of Hindu landlords, who had their homes pillaged and burnt, and often did not escape with their lives. The Kutchi these days obviously feel their sympathies to lie with the "high" caste Hindus, calling them "poor things" and lamenting their departure.

On the other hand, as revealed earlier, they dislike intensely any inference that once they were "below" these people on the hierarchical ladder. Brusquely putting aside such suggestions, they concentrate upon their shared essence of Hinduism. The Kutchi younger people stress that they always ate together and were basically very similar. The old will on rare occasions admit the superiority of the others and then attempt quickly to change the subject.

Likewise with the Moslems; they are considered the bad influences of the past who necessitated the division of India and Pakistan, a situation the Kutchi still lament. In public, Moslem differences are always stressed and all their "hateful" customs and practices. I have only heard on minimal occasions the undoubted underlying current taking

them nearer towards Moslem beliefs being voiced and then again by the old.

Some Hindus say that they eat with Sindi, if the latter eat with them. If they are haparo (nice, decent). They did not use to, in their ancestor's time. Before, Hindus used to be in control. Now that the countries are separate, the Sindi are in charge, and so the Kori eat with them sometimes. With the same utensils.

Note in the above statement, that Hindus in general changes into Kori in particular; that the Sindi have to fit into an especially approved category; that political developments are being in some measure noted by this old woman; and that the picture is slanted towards the preferred viewpoint of the Kutchi in that it fails to recognise that most "high" caste Moslems would refuse to eat or drink with the Kutchi.

2) RITUAL

I will look here at certain changes in ritual patterns. At a basic level, Kutchi women bemoan the fact that they have less ceremonies and rituals than they used to have. (This is perhaps exaggeration, on the grounds that nowhere is the present deemed as good as the past.) Nevertheless, when comparing their lives with those of the Indian Kutchi, Zati said:

They dance, sing, eat, celebrate and praise the gods when the rains come. They have to, you see. We don't have to any more. We don't do the wheat harvest celebrations any more either.

In a general way then, many such rituals concerning fertility and prosperity are felt to be unnecessary these days.

In a similar way, as discussed in part one of this chapter, pseudo-western medicine has taken over to a great extent from the bhopa's traditional realm. "Doctors are cleverer than bhopa for most things these days." To emphasise this perhaps, a bhopa's wife who became ill was taken into town to a doctor for a "needle". There was no longer a practising bhopa in the host village and the villagers said

that they did not need one. If they ever did have need, they believed that they could always find one in a nearby village.

Less men were also reported to be learning jadhy (magic/spells).

There are so many taboos that have to be kept, and people cannot be bothered these days. For example, you have to beware the path of ants, and not eat for a day at a time.

On the theme of the traditional Hindu festivals, there was also felt by the people to have been a certain amount of change. I was present when the bhopa of a nearby village was in tears on account of the poor attendance at a Parwa ceremony.

It used to be such a family festival. Everybody used to come, and now no-one does; not many anyway. Everyone was asked to bring things too, and no-one bothered this year.

The same bhopa, although intensely proud of the zach temple, which is newly built and lovingly decorated, does not perform many of the former rites, saying that he cannot because he is a poor man and has to work in the fields for the family's livelihood. A transistor radio played Pakistani music joyfully as he and his assistants performed their major sacrifice of the year in the temple.

Some of the Hachmo rites in the host village had been discontinued by the baptised Christian women.

We go out to bathe, but we don't bother with the rest, as we are all Christians now.

One of the men described the Hachmo rites of the Parkari. When asked why the Kutchi did not celebrate in such a way, he replied:

There was never so much enthusiasm, and we have never followed such traditions.

AT Hutani also, there were apparently more associated rituals formerly.

Many of our rites have been dropped. There used to be lots, but times are changing, and folk are doing without."(Disappointedly) "Old Hutani used to be much bigger affairs. The women would bring coals from their hearths, and with them light the fires. The whole village would be seated and watching from the time the fires were lit to the time when they had burned down. Then, finally the women would

each take some coals back to their home hearth, and these would be left burning for twelve months to the next Hutani. There were no matches then. (A Bhagat's son-in-law.)

Changes have also taken place with respect to life-cycle rituals, although less in the areas over which women have control, such as birth and naming. Women are proud of their traditions, rituals and identity and perceive no need for change. It is from the men that the drift towards external conformity has been coming. Yet even here we must be careful, because it has not been coming from all men, and it is also a special category of conformity; not total conformity, but one in which certain core values must be adhered to, but where the paths to these may be permitted significant alteration.

An example of this conflict of values occurred in the period before a wedding, when the women had gathered to sing their songs at the household of a village bride. The women here perceived what they were doing to be of equal, if not more importance than the preoccupation of the men.

The women had somehow managed to acquire a pressure lamp and they were singing, sitting upon a rush mat beside it. The light was intended to attract other women singers from neighbouring households. No men were present when they started. Very soon however, many started to arrive, lured by the lamp and the prospect of a game of cards - their favourite winter pastime.

At first it was just the young men, who sat in another corner, enjoying the reflected light of the lamp. Then middle-aged, more powerful men arrived and began to mock the proceedings. They talked and laughed loudly. One man started to tease his wife while she was singing, by lifting her veil and making her very embarrassed; although she did not, or could not, tell him not to do so.

Then, the men played a cassette recorder very loudly. The music exuding from it was totally different and so the women's songs were thrown into partial confusion. They stopped and looked hopefully

around for help. Whereupon the head of the household seized his opportunity and told the women to move; saying who did they think they were, monopolising the lamp and mat; and that women were obviously becoming totally above themselves these days. The other men present supported his argument. The women moved to the rear of the uthak, with some muttering, and definite resentment. They continued singing for a little while, but the excitement had obviously departed from the occasion, and they soon left for their homes.

I mention this example not only to show contrasting attitudes to social change, but also because it was one of the rare occasions where the women appeared to resent the men and define their actions as inappropriate. For a western observer who had looked in vain for this type of rebellion, it perhaps assumed disproportionate importance. The female ideal and norm is quiet acceptance of place. In this example, therefore, we can see the value women attach to their own ritual domain and a rarely expressed anger that the men do not accord it its due significance.

Within different contexts, other changes are taking place. The funeral ceremony is being changed from moriva pat to Gita pat. Despite hesitations and hasty improvisations as to believable reasons, the most general feeling appears to be their firm reliance upon the more literate form of the new ceremony. With its strong dependence upon calendar, time and sacred book, it is more in keeping with ideas of Hindu orthodoxy, and also the Moslem Quranic influence.

So far, this new ceremony has been a struggle for everyone to follow and learn, especially for the women, and the bhagat presiding would perform everything book in hand, in an attempt to follow the "correct" procedure. Yet this was the funeral men were choosing to have for the dead these days and it was accordingly granted great status and prestige. People were starting to say that no-one had moriva pat ceremonies "these days", being so inferior; although a few did still take place. I did not observe one, but one was held for the mother of a close neighbour and the latter described it for me.

Moriya pat appears to share certain symbols with the wedding ceremony. Moriya - the twelve pots used - was also the term used to refer to the groom's wedding crown; a white cloth was also brought back to the village when the date had been fixed by an astrologer; and the women retained a more important part in the proceedings.

A specific reason, mentioned before and often quoted by the people, for traditions having been discontinued was that, "They say that we shouldn't." On further probing, this was claimed to be the bhagat, who had decided against a certain custom for some reason or other.

Earlier it was evidenced that women are excluded from Bhakti, which has been gaining importance as an influence in Kutchi men's lives. The bhagat's proclamations generally occur at such occasions, where the women have no voice. In the non-Bhakti rites of the past, women's role was clearly defined in terms of their songs, food offerings and practices. Social change, due to Bhakti and Kutchi male insecurity as a minority group, is to a degree affecting the earlier complementarity of male and female ritual realms, and is somewhat upsetting the balance in favour of men. Women resent this, as was shown in the ethnographic scene I have just described.

A funeral rite thus lost was still much grieved by the women and fondly remembered. I was unable to discover whether this formerly accompanied the moriya pat ceremony, or had been separate. Certainly, it does not occur at the few remaining moriya pat these days. Yet its memory was still so alive and vivid in the minds of the women, that it was obviously not a piece of the distant past and was of especial importance to the older women. Their eyes used to shine when talking about it, for which they unusually needed no encouragement. (This was because it was a specifically female ritual, of which they were proud to have the knowledge.)

As they talked, they implied that Kutchi life these days was not at all the same; rather disappointing in fact:

In the old days, a type of tent was constructed from cloth and quilts. Only the feet of those inside could be seen. Men

could not distinguish who was there. Inside sit the women. The widower's "wives" sit there, with their heads uncovered and their hair loose." (Very important, as previously they would have had to practise avoidance in front of the deceased.) "They have their veils over one shoulder, like a sash, and they beat their breasts and sing (piti); sometimes they beat themselves so much that they bled. A Bhagatani (female ritual specialist) mainly sings. Other women are sitting there too, veiled and sobbing, including the widow. They sing four songs in the morning, and in the evening, having tea and a break in between.

(Again like the wedding.)

I asked the women if they ever sang these songs to a dead woman. 'What would you sing to a woman! Who would sing anything to a woman! It was just to the men. If he was an old man, they would sing - "Dado, come back to this land of ours. Come away from darkness." If a young man, they would sing - "Lado (bridegroom) come back to us, come to your homeland, and away from darkness."

Such a rite was seemingly not performed for a young unmarried boy nor for women - either young or old. The women did not want me to write any more of the words of these songs, saying that the death ones were not "nice"; that they were not like the wedding ones, decent, and that they therefore should not be written. However, the two actual widows present on this occasion, sang fragments again, while imitating beating their breasts.

The women weep, for the one dead, and for all their other dead memories. They gradually stop, until only the widow herself is left weeping. They used to do this every day until the kharas. Now, people just come to weep with the widow. They arrive every so often to weep as visitors.

A little later, having obviously been mulling over the whole idea, despite the conversation having turned to something else, one old widow said:

What is the point singing for someone to come back anyway? They will never come back, they have gone.

As I mentioned in the last part, burial, instead of the burning of the dead, is another custom where the Kutchi diverge from their past, from their kin in India and from a few Hindu groups left in Sind.

Parkari and Bhagri still burn their dead. Bhil and Kori bury now; they have left most of the old customs.

I will now illustrate some of their reasons and justifications for this fairly radical social change. To start with, it is not a topic that they like to discuss. Great discomfort and embarrassment are evidenced and there is a fundamentally different attitude from that of the women prepared willingly to describe the earlier rite.

In response to the question why they bury now, a first reaction will be a shrug, a reiteration of the fact that they have "left" burning, and a statement that burial is "better". After further questioning, they usually grasp material reasons; much wood is required to burn a person, and there is less available these days. (There is in fact ample wood to support the few large villages in the area and also enough for poor entrepreneurs to turn into charcoal for the towns; more than there is in Gujarat, and quite as much as in the old days in Sind.)

They would also say that it required much fat to set fire to the corpse properly and that they were too poor to provide this. Such a statement is in obvious direct contradiction to their general ones about their higher standard of living, nor does it accord with the Indian case, where they are poorer, but still feel that they are required to use ghi and wood.

These justifications are therefore not the total picture. Choice is involved and perhaps now they do not choose to "waste" their wealth in such a manner. The "valid" question therefore becomes why they have chosen this new path. A probable answer is the Moslem influence. Moslems find the burning of the dead distasteful and would perhaps have exerted informal or formal pressure upon the "low" caste Hindus to stop this sometime in the past. Perhaps, on the other hand, the Kutchi perceived their practices to be at odds with the outside world and voluntarily changed their ways.

It was obviously however a male decision, as women do not feature in such situations. In addition, the latter find it more difficult than the

men to arrive at justifications for abandoning burning, although they too will, if pressed, echo the male line of argument more or less exactly.

They were all embarrassed to find the practice still maintained in India and afterwards attempted some more reasons.

We used to burn our dead, but not anymore. Men say that the smell is bad and enters their minds. The corpse's smell when burnt is very evil. You also need lots of wood. (a young woman)

As if to change the subject, an older woman joined in with changes that have occurred in required food and drink at funeral feasts:

In the old days, a goat would be killed, or expensive meat bought, but now rice will do. Black tea was served, but now milky tea will do after the first day.

On another occasion, an old man attempted to explain it all, emphasising the immodesty and shamefulness of former practices and unusually making explicit the preference for Moslem customs in this instance.

Let me explain. When we used to burn our dead, this is what would happen. The fire would be lit, and the clothes and everything would burn, and then as the actual body burnt, the flesh tightened and the body would sit up. Now, if it were your own mother you were burning, think how awful it would be. There she would be, sitting up and naked. You would have made her a bhuruwi (loose woman). And, worse still, you would then have to take a stick and poke at the burning corpse to push it to pieces, so that it would burn properly. And there are the parts that explode - the stomach for instance - and water flies in all directions, and bits of stomach. There are parts that will not burn; the chest of a man will not burn, and must be left. Nor will that part of the woman which is below her stomach. That will not burn at all. So you see, it is much better for our dead to be buried.

Everyone present nodded seriously in agreement. He continued:

We used to just dig a hole and throw the body in any old way, and then when we filled it in, the dust would go in its eyes and in its mouth. But nowadays, we dig out the wall of the grave, and having laid out the body properly, we close the shelf up, and then fill in the hole. Then, there is no fear, because the body lies as if sleeping, in a clear space and no dust gets in.

Someone interjected:
"Like the Moslems do."

The others nodded, satisfied.

In a similar vein, perhaps again because of Moslem influence and the associated increased notion of female shame, bhagat have apparently declared that there should be no more mixed dancing at weddings. The Kutchi have their own traditional dance routines, accompanied by a drum and their own chanted singing. Now, men will dance happily at weddings; but within a male group. Women may theoretically dance in an all-female group at weddings, but in practice, they do not have much opportunity as the men love dancing and tend to monopolise drum and dance space. The women bemoan the fact that they do not have much chance to dance and say that life is not as much fun as it used to be on such occasions. They do not blame the men for this, but are instead resentful of the external circumstances which have made such a change necessary.

Mixed group dancing is not supposed to take place at weddings anymore, there being too large a group present and many unrelated persons. Within the village however, where everyone has obligations to one another, it is still possible and I observed this happening once. Some husbands disapprove even of this and their wives are not permitted to take part, despite continuous veiling in the dark and the subsequent difficulty in recognition. On such occasions, the men sing a line of chant, while all move round in a circle. The women respond with their chant, whilst making a sweeping gesture with their bodies.

The belief in the "evil" of dancing in these changed times, at first said to have emanated from the bhagat, but now echoed by most men and women; is expressed thus:

Times have become bad. If women danced with the men, they would get molested and touched rudely. It is dark, you see. The Bhagat and Padri say that it is bad for both sexes to dance together. "If you dance together, you will soon be sleeping together." In the old days, we used to dance together a lot and girls did too. Girls and boys could sleep in the same place and no-one would suspect a thing. That

was when they could, because the country was "better".

These type of ideas have also probably encouraged more decorum and decency in terms of women's dress. I mentioned earlier the importance of bodily coverage, probably increasing, in that now long blouses and new-style western vests are a necessity. My own attire was called into question more than once, as I disliked wearing a vest in the heat and thus did not resemble a modest young wife, but instead those older ladies whose ideas of fashion had been formed in an earlier generation. Similarly, I would be reprimanded if my veil did not adequately cover my back when I was outside the village.

"That is all right inside the village, but not here."
(Middle-aged man.)

This is interesting, as generally the outside of the village is defined as freer and less inhibited sexually, between the Kutchi. There is however, the constant fear of outside males.

Although wedding rituals seem to have changed less than funerals, being more generally the province of women and correspondingly resistant to change, there had been some alterations over recent years, which were brought to my attention. Yet again, the emphasis was upon phasing out the "rude" and "risque" elements, in terms of the songs sung by the women, and rites formerly performed which were obviously sexual in nature.

In the old days, when we sat by the wedding platform, we used to sing, "Here come the monkeys for the bride. The bride hides in shame." But now we do not sing it anymore, because the groom's party objected to being called monkeys. It was made a rule that only "nice" songs would be allowed, and no such "bad" ones. One can see their point. I mean, how would you like to be called a monkey? (Zatu)

You know, the weddings of old were very bad. The bridegroom and bride were made to stand holding each other and a big grain pounder was passed through between them, and also the top of a reed. Then, the bridegroom's mother-in-law would grab his nose and pull and he would try to blow snot into her hand." (Nasal mucus symbolically and conceptually is semen.) "It was all in good fun! My own mother-in-law did this to me when I was married. Then the bridegroom would grab the corner of her veil and demand, "What will you give me?" She would then have to promise a

milk-giving animal - cow, buffalo, goat - before he would let her go. This was all after the encirclement ceremony. Nowadays these customs are no longer followed. (Young middle-aged man)

3) WEALTH

I mentioned in the last chapter, how the jewelry was all given at the actual wedding ceremony by the Sind Kutchi, as opposed to different stages as did the Indian Kutchi, and how the former were embarrassed when this was stated. In a similar vein, there seems to have been a change in the kinswomen who are given cloth by the bride's family.

"In the old days, we gave clothes to everyone, but then they were cheap."

Inflation has of course affected the Kutchi - from jewelry, clothes and food, to amounts of money given at any ritual. In general however, I would say that their standard of living has kept pace with inflation; in many cases exceeding it.

When I asked which women they specifically gave to these days, the response was

Anyone we want to. If we want clothes from them at their wedding, or a large money gift from them at this one, we give them clothes.

This basically implies giving to the richer members of the community in order to receive later. The fact that they used to give to more people, despite their poverty, shows that there is definite evidence of changing priorities from the emphasis of personal relationship bonds and ties to a more materialistic perception of reality, where quantity and quality count more.

Thus the disappearance of the mamiro (a gift from the bride's mother's brother) which is still present in a wedding song, if not in practice.

It used to be that when one's marriage was arranged, one's mama (mother's brother), would bring clothes for one's father, mother and whole family. Now, he cannot afford it. But we used to say - "Mama is bringing the mamiro".

These changes in attitude, have also partially been noted in the section on visiting, where women were seen to be reluctant to go to other villages or to stay once there. In my opinion, the materialistic rise in their standard of living has something to do with this also. Before, when they were semi-nomadic, they were seen to have fewer possessions. Travelling was perceived as less of an ordeal and anyway, they were more accustomed to it. Social contact with like groups of Kutchi was at a premium and more important, in that it gave a sense of security amongst different and perhaps alien, ethnic groups. Nowadays, with permanent settlements, riches and comfort at home, travelling and visiting have lost something of their charm and appeal.

While we are talking of these changes, we can also talk about status differences occurring in the wedding feasts themselves these days. Formerly, dhal (lentils) and rice were served at the bride's village (and at bha'o), and they still are in some poorer families and villages. There is an increasing trend to sneer at plain dhal on these occasions however - ruji dhal - "It was just dhal," serves to illustrate an opposition between those people who can afford to add vegetables to their dhal for that number of people - for example, potatoes, tomatoes and marrows - and those who cannot.

There is also perhaps emerging a tendency to consolidate wealth in marriage. Rich men are seeking to forge marriage arrangements with similarly rich men and the poor are by default marrying the poor. With no such inequalities in former times, no such possibilities presented themselves.

Associatedly, rich men are managing to "purchase" labour and services from those less fortunate, although as yet it also involves kinship. Increasingly, the Kutchi are emphasising that woman's correct place is within the village and are copying Moslem patterns in this, as is sometimes recognised by the Kutchi themselves.

In the old days, Kutchi women used to do all the work and their husbands used to smoke and drink tea at home. At that time, Sindi men used to do all the work in the fields and their wives used to stay at home in more or less pardah. These days, things have changed. Kutchi women have become

more cheeky, refuse to work so much and stay at home. So the men have to work much more outside the village. On the other hand, Sindi men are staying at home and their wives are doing all the work in the fields and wandering further and further abroad. We have become like they used to be and they have become like we used to be. (Middle-aged man)

The value of many domestic animals, which were formerly regarded as symbols of affluence and prestige are also gradually changing. Many animals require much feeding and women getting grass for them outside the village for long periods at a time. There is a vague trend towards only enough animals to satisfy the family in milk and fat so that the wives perform less external labour. Alternatively, young women from other poorer households could be "persuaded" to fetch the grass.

Similarly, it was interesting to note that poorer women could be persuaded to help remove the impurities of their richer kinswomen, in terms of washing clothes after birth pollution and even helping with the birth itself. These are dirty, impure tasks which the women involved dislike talking about, try their best to disclaim any responsibility for, and for any associated contamination.

Less women were found to be picking the cash-crop cotton these days, because of the trend to follow the Moslem pattern of keeping the women at home, out of view of other village men and especially outsiders. Being kept out of the sun also enhances a woman's beauty and prestige, as a dark skin is disliked and ridiculed.

"I like picking cotton, but my husband will not let me anymore."

However, the money received from it is obviously less valued than formerly, as it is not a requisite for household survival in an increasing number of cases. Nor does it give individual women any more prestige or autonomy, being given in the main to the husband for reputed redistribution purposes. Thus, some families found it hard to obtain sufficient cotton-picking help, unless they could wield power over the less fortunate, and many wealthy women could be found instead sitting in the village, gossiping and sewing quilts. One man had to provide a rice feast to ensure that enough workers would materialise.

Associatedly, the Kutchi in the host village were increasingly relying upon other ethnic groups to work for them. Parkari came and helped with a vegetable and a wheat harvest and were paid for their services, (see photograph twelve, of their settlement). Bhil were domiciled at the edge of the village working for the patel, much to everyone's displeasure. Sindi men with donkeys would remove animal and human excrement from behind the houses, with which to manure the fields, for a fee. Mohun, a son of the old patel, decided that it was a nuisance for him or the rest of his family to sit in his mango orchard, guarding it night and day against human and animal thieves and so he sold the year's rights to a Bhagri, who therefore guarded it and received all the forthcoming profits. As Sahlin (1972) has said, the aim is not to exploit to capacity or to become as rich as possible whatever the personal cost. A balance is reached whereby sufficient money and minimal bodily effort are held in equilibrium.

The general trend towards up-casteing has been dealt with earlier in terms of ideology, identity and increasingly vegetarian diet. Increased material wealth makes this more possible, but external factors must be considered as there are most probably economic and political limits beyond which surrounding Moslems will not let them proceed.

Money, clothing and possessions are obvious signs of increased material wealth. The number of motor-bikes within the village had risen from one to five in four years. The number of hand-pumps had risen from two to seven in the same period; luxury cassette recorders from zero to four.

The patel had acquired a tractor just before the commencement of the fieldwork period. This was hired by others to help with their agricultural work. It also served as a minor bus service to the market town, carrying all the crops to be sold and also people to purchase luxury items with the received cash. Changes in diet were probably due to this increased access to the market; different fruits and vegetables were being consumed, and perhaps more meat and fish by the men.

When the patel decided to build a tube-well outside the village, the tractor's fan-belt was used, until an engine was obtained much later. The patel's son, who ran the older village shop, decided, against his father's will, to invest in an old jeep. Provided that it was working, this gave additional access to town to a wider range of people, including women.

Those involved in the increased prosperity are delighted, because so far it has been on their own terms - taking what they desire, but leaving anything worrying or controversial. It is not surprising, therefore, that those who are still poor and struggling show the signs of bitterness and cynicism, as they are increasingly dragged into village competition against their wills, chiefly by their families.

For example, one new bride of a poor family said that she would not wear a cotton blouse when she was married. Her parents were angry and disturbed, her mother drawing the father's attention to the matter:

Just listen to your daughter, she is used to riches now. She says that she will not wear the type of blouse that I have been wearing for years. It has apparently got to be nylon now.

(Father) - You will be lucky to get any blouse at all, your in-laws are poor. Kori have been wearing cotton blouses from the beginning. What a change in all our lives! Now, if one woman gets something, they all clamour to have one like it. What is the point, just to do work in?

On another occasion, when one rather self-important man was trying to explain that all their rites derived from the Hindu Scriptures, another old man interrupted, annoyed and cynical:

Rubbish! A few years ago, we Kori possessed no more than a couple of quilts each and spent one month here and one there, chasing around trying to find work and at the beck and call of any landlord whom we chanced to come upon. Where did we ever get any of our rites from a Scripture? Now look at us! We have jewelry and clothes, and silk veils, and jeeps and tractors!

I have already described how education is still very limited and as yet the Kutchi can perceive no advantage in more than one boy per family being educated. Education brings its own rewards to the recipient however, as because it is a rare resource, he is permitted a life of luxury, no physical work and a minimum amount of reading and writing to undertake on the rare occasions anyone needs his services.

Actual knowledge of western medicine too is minimal, although the forms themselves have almost totally supplanted the traditional responses. In curing many women's fertility problems, western medicine is changing attitudes amongst women to female barrenness; women can be cured if taken to the doctor, therefore if they have been, the fault must be in the man.

If women give birth in town they are happy to discontinue temporarily their purity and dietary taboos. Outside the village and far from observation this is possible. They generally still prefer to give birth at home however, where the old rules still apply.

As we have seen in the section on birth control, the women do not want to change their situation. They want only to keep it as it was. This in the past meant fewer children, as the infant mortality rate is dropping in present day Sind. Men are more inclined to perceive a need for birth control. In this respect, there may be ascertained a subtle change in attitudes and values, as the Kutchi realise how detrimental the partitioning of land-holdings and tenancies may prove to future generations of many sons. In small ways, they therefore appear to be investing future hope in wealth and education and its division amongst a small number of sons, rather than in many male descendants.

On the other hand, in opposition to this, there is the reported tendency amongst ethnic minority groups to practise less birth control because they feel threatened by the dominant majority. Certainly, the Moslems in Pakistan appear to utilise contraception more than the Hindu

groups, whereas I am told it is the opposite situation in India.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can see that many changes have been taking place amongst the Kutchi in terms of ideology, tradition, and wealth. There is of course an interrelationship of all these elements. External influence, such as Moslem dominance as perceived by the men, is contributing to gradual changes initiated by the men in respect of former apparently "shameful" traditions, the attempted acquisition of "higher" caste status, and its corresponding justification in terms of sacred literature. Men therefore, because of their knowledge of their minority position, feel to an extent forced to adapt and compromise.

Women however are resistant to change in areas over which they feel they have control, or where it threatens their concepts, traditions or practices. They often appear upset or bewildered about ritual alterations. They do not understand the necessity and struggle to come to terms with male explanations and justifications. They do not experience a devaluation of their group in their daily lives and their sense of security lies in their belief in themselves and their unique Kutchi rites.

In terms of material possessions, women feel that they can easily add them to their homes and bodies, as these are simply more of the same things and values. Novelty is disturbing, but in addition, it is seen as unnecessary. Women are content in their isolated realm. Symbols of wealth and prestige help them better to compete with each other, but they are not at all interested in changing the rules of the game or of introducing external factors. They may have sufficiency, or insufficiency in their own terms and this must be maintained or gained, but it does not necessitate any additional or extraneous thought. Some goals are materially accessible and ideology is conditioned by tradition not by a new form of competition vis-a-vis men, or even other groups.

For men also, the acquisition of material things is seen in a similar light. Outward symbols of wealth and prestige simply imply "more" and not essentially "different", and can be used by them in a similar manner to maintain power relationships within the male realm.

The manner in which men and women are operating is therefore not essentially different. Where the difference lies is in terms of access to alternative social environments and world-views. The men simply have to explore a wider range of possibilities before maintaining, altering, or ignoring certain conceptual schemes.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE CONCLUSION

1) Ethnographic Summary.

2) Theoretical Summary.

In Conclusion.

1) ETHNOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

In the preceding chapters, I have presented detailed ethnographic data on the position, pragmatic and conceptual, of Kutchi women.

Chapter three considered their role within the family, from conception to old age. Here, the practical was emphasised more than the cerebral, as their chief roles within the household situation were defined and explored. However, even here, it was noted that despite age and economic position, there was evidenced a very real sense of female identity and a solidarity of purpose and value. This is not merely the individual socialisation found in western societies, but a definition of self formed only within the group; an essence, as they experience it, of womanhood. From the first, therefore, they defined themselves in opposition to men and in terms of the female group, which enclosed both their attitudes and interests.

In chapter four I focussed upon the position of women within the village. Here, the emphasis was upon the corporate mentality of the group; the manner in which women conceptualised their own position and powers; and the resultant maintenance of their perception of

reality and self-identity. Special attention was paid to the ritual realm, in which women express themselves and their ethnic pride. This mode of thought was contrasted with that of the men, both in terms of the symbols utilised and in the meaning ascribed.

Thus, in this segregated and isolated social context, the women were seen to embody a relatively group-sufficient unit, in terms of both value and attitude. They saw themselves in opposition both to men and also to other social groups. This female mode of thought was typified in the wedding rituals, where the perceived role of the women was to oppose the future affines. Their antagonism at this level was expressed towards another kinship group, and the men were reluctantly acknowledged (and thought themselves) as mediators. Thus, the female group oppositional principle was seen throughout the ethnography to take many forms, dependent on social context; for example their stereotyping of roles and their refusal in the small-scale environment to voice anything positive about the female members of another zach. Transposed to its widest possible level, this was expressed in supreme pride of the Kutchi as a caste and the solidarity of all Kutchi women.

Chapter five developed the ideas of encompassment and encapsulation that were introduced to a certain extent in the preceding chapter. Here, the emphasis was upon the way women perceived themselves in opposition to external society, the manner in which they maintained the integrity of their own group, and the importance which they attached to this. In the part on social change, women were as yet, seen to define their own rules and boundaries. Contrasts were drawn with women in different social contexts, both Kutchi and those from other groups. Decreased encapsulation was seen to result in changed perceptions of value and identity.

From an external or male viewpoint, Kutchi society could be seen to share much with other cultures on the Indian sub-continent; a caste ideology, the low status of women, and a commonly perceived acceptance of the latter. This was seen to be to a certain extent true at the level of practice (in everyday power relationships), and also

at the level of the symbolic categories people use to define their consciousness of social reality.

Thus, from the male viewpoint certain basic oppositions are obtained;

<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>
High	Low
Clean	Dirty
Clever	Stupid
Talkers	Gossips
Thinkers	Non-Thinkers
Strong	Weak
Individuals	Group-Members
Modern	Traditional
Superior	Inferior

This is the traditional manner of looking at society in the Indian sub-continent and concurs well with the ideas of Kutchi men as they define their own position and that of their women in society.

However, from this, we obtain only a partial picture. Women also view their world in terms of oppositions and contrasts. There exist distinctively female emphases and value-judgements which although these do not challenge the women's own actual place in society or that of the men, nevertheless reflect the values that they attach to certain attributes, (see also Whyte 1981:364). The data of the thesis illustrate that women may maintain a basic acceptance of "place" and its appropriateness, but that women do not actually have to think of things in the same way. Thus,

<u>WOMEN</u>	<u>MEN</u>
Subordinate	Dominant
Traditional	Modern

Identity-Pride.....Identity-Shame
 Sexually-Strong.....Sexually-Weak
 Non-Workers.....External-Workers
 High-Caste-Wives.....Husbands
 Maintenance-of-Home..Maintenance-of-Outside
 Freed-from-Travel....Travellers
 Internal-Talkers.....External-Talkers
 Firm.....Fluctuating
 Mothers.....Sperm-Providers
 Group-Members.....Individuals
 Preservers.....Compromisers

Sheltered from the outside by their lack of mobility and inability to communicate externally, women feel themselves superior to other peoples in general and especially to lower caste women.

Men, on the other hand, knowing only too well their position within the caste system, tend to feel poor and ashamed in terms of their social place. Therefore, although in relation to their women the men have their usual high caste role, the situation is really more complex, segmentary and obscure when the existence of external society is taken into consideration. Here, the men feel themselves to be relatively lowly and the women feel themselves to be relatively high. The attitudes of women are thus generally happier and more secure, (See also Ridd 1981).

Perhaps because of the external situation, men in this context are more determined than ever to gain at least the respect of their wives. In some ways, this was seen to be true.

2) THEORETICAL SUMMARY

In the initial theoretical introduction and in my short review of the literature on women in South Asia, it was seen that the main emphases of sociologists and anthropologists have been upon the relative powerlessness of women; the controls used to maintain their

subordination; the infeasibility of their economic co-operation; individual exceptions which are outwith the "letter of the law"; and the necessity on the part of men to define all women as part of a category or class. (Jeffery 1979, Sharma 1980).

These aspects have indeed all been present in my descriptive ethnography and have in fact been briefly mentioned in the summary above. There have also, however, been others.

The fact that men define women as a category and do not think of them as individuals as we would in the west does not mean that Kutchi women would necessarily find "our" categorisation preferable. As we have seen, they too define themselves as part of the group and see their practical and conceptual behaviour in these terms. Perhaps here I would go further than Skjonsberg (1982), in claiming that it is in fact a caste mentality and that the basics of this mentality have been amply described by Dumont in a slightly different context (1970). We shall soon be returning to Dumont.

Here, I will refer to the purported lack of economic collaboration amongst women and question some of these assumptions. Perhaps we deny women the right of defining their own situation and their perceptions of it, if we assume that because they lack the power or the economic resources which we deem essential, they in fact think of themselves as a subordinate category and are therefore automatically self-devalued. Surely, we have adopted unquestioningly our own western value-system, and perhaps the ideology of Indian men, if we deny these women their own sense of identity and reality - even if we do so simply because of academic emphasis and implication (see also MacCormack 1980)?

This is not only true of women, who, as Skjonsberg has demonstrated, resemble a "special caste" in very fundamental ways of ascription and definition, but it may also be true of low castes. The latter, although perhaps accepting their subordination in political and economic terms, do not undervalue themselves in other respects. As

Sharma (1978b) has described in an analysis of village beliefs, status and relative misfortune are attributed by the people themselves to "life", or to the foul play of others, rather than to an acceptance of their own intrinsic sin or lowliness. In short, their own conception of self is not devalued by arbitrary external categorisation.

Perhaps in this we should return to Dumont who convincingly contrasts our Western ideals of equality and individualism with that of the hierarchical and social conceptualisation of the Hindu. An acceptance of asymmetry, which is so alien to our way of thinking, may indeed define and confine the realities of both the members of castes and women, as members of another caste. The latter may also present their position in their own mode of expression, which must be elicited, translated and not devalued.

Another way of remaining shut in upon ourselves, consists in assuming from the outset, that ideas, beliefs, and values - in a word, ideology - have a secondary place in social life, and can be explained by, or reduced to, other aspects of society. The principle of equality, and the principle of hierarchy are facts, indeed they are among the most constraining facts, of political and social life. (Dumont 1970:37)

Sharma expresses something similar, when she states,

Most of the women I knew, did not experience their position as women as being oppressive, though they might express a sense of impotence as landless labourers, of insecurity as overworked peasants on tiny holdings, or frustration as housewives making do on a husband's low salary in the face of rapid inflation. . . . The segregation of women means that they are less likely to compare themselves with men, but more likely to see their prestige and standing as derivative of their menfolk. Also, the ethic of the female as the repository of family honour, does not conflict with an ideology of individual achievement and self-fulfilment, as it does in the west. Women tend to see their position as dependants as problematic only when the machinery of dependance breaks down - when the husband fails to provide, when he is sick or dies and the wife is left with no provider. (Sharma 1980:208)

It was an important finding of the present research that women as a "caste" expressed themselves in terms of that "caste's" ideology. When we talk about their lack of mobilisation of resources and economic collaboration with other women, these are all ways in which

we like to define women's possibilities in our own society. We must beware of basic and implicit value-judgements, because here we deny an image of femaleness that the women hold for each other and for themselves. This is their special ideology. Despite being separated spatially in many households, they retain a female world-view which may change in perspective over the years, but which never becomes a male one and can always be seen in opposition to the male mode of thought.

Thus, I would wish to switch emphasis slightly from most writers I focussed upon in the introduction, to suggest that what is evident amongst these women is a solidarity of thought rather than action; and although this may be affected by internal structural problems of an economic or political nature, it will not be changed profoundly, or even questioned realistically, unless the basic premises upon which the shared reality is founded are made to alter dramatically.

From here, we can therefore usefully widen the perspective on the data, by looking at models used to describe women in other societies. Rosaldo and Lamphere, in their introduction to Woman, Culture and Society, make a plea for a more realistic assessment of the position of women in society.

Anthropologists in writing about human culture, have mainly followed our own culture's ideological bias in treating women as relatively invisible and describing what are largely the activities and interests of men. In order to correct that bias, to alter our conceptions of the female, and to understand their source, what we need are new perspectives. Today, it seems reasonable to argue that the social world is the creation of both male and female actors, and that any full understanding of human society, and any viable programme for social change will have to incorporate the goals, thoughts, and activities of the "second sex". (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974:7)

Later, talking about male dominance, and our implicit perspectives and accordance with that dominance, they say,

Because men everywhere tend to have more prestige than women, and because men are usually associated with the social roles of dominance and authority, most previous descriptions of social processes have treated women as being theoretically uninteresting. Women who exercise power are seen as deviants, manipulators, or at best, exceptions. And women's goals and ideologies are assumed to be co-ordinate with those

The last sentence brings forward a point of specific interest to this thesis, where it was found that an encapsulated female group had somewhat different goals and ideologies from those of the more mobile men.

From here, we can look at an important perspective donated by E.Ardener on the subject of models and societies. His female/nature equation has since been questioned by many (see MacCormack and Strathern 1980), but the basic ideas as to definition and society's self-conceptualisation are very interesting.

Men have to bound themselves in relation both to women and to nature. Since, women are biologically not men, it would be surprising if they bounded themselves against nature in the same way as men do. Yet, we have seen that the men's models are characteristically dominant in the ethnography. If men are the ones who become aware of "other cultures" more frequently than do women, it may well be that they are likely to develop metalevels of categorization that enables them at least to consider the necessity to bound themselves- and- their- women from other- men- and- their- women. Therefore, all such ways of bounding society against society, including our own, may have an inherent maleness...If men, because of their political dominance, may tend purely pragmatically to "need" total bounding models of either type, women may tend to take over men's models when they share the same definitional problems as men. But the models set up by women bounding themselves are not encompassed in those men's models. They still subsist, and both sexes through their common humanity are aware of the contradictions. (Ardener,E 1975:5-6)

This was found to be very relevant for the Kutchi case in Sind, where the men indeed had contact with external groups, whereas the women did not. The consequences this had for women's world-view have been evidenced. The men were defined in a certain manner by outsiders and women were sheltered from such categorizations. The male-identity-model therefore encompassed these ideas and some of the valuations. The women's one did not.

Moving away slightly from the field of models and world-view, we can return to the exercise of power and the potentiality of

alternative statements from women, earlier hinted at by Rosaldo and Lamphere. Bourdieu discusses this in terms of kinship from his Algerian research.

In this competition, the men have the whole official institution on their side, starting with the mythico-ritual representations and the representations of kinship which, by reducing the opposition between the outside and the inside, hence the male and the female, establish a systematic hierarchization, condemning women's interventions to a shameful, secret, or at best unofficial existence. Even when women do wield the real power, as is often the case in matrimonial matters, they can exercise it fully only on condition that they leave the appearance of power, that is, its official manifestation, to the men; to have any power at all, women must make do with the unofficial power of the eminence grise, a dominated power which is opposed to affinal power in that it can operate only by proxy, under the cover of an official authority, as well as to the subversive refusal of the rule-breaker, in that it still serves the authority it uses. (Bourdieu 1977:41)

Thus, although the distribution of power is unequal, women still have a form of access to it. They can use different channels to attain the same, or different, ends in the same social structure. Bourdieu's model is therefore not an alternative one, but is essentially a silent form. This is the argument adopted by those who think of women in some respects as a "muted group". As E. Ardener says,

Only at the level of the analysis of belief can the voiceless masses be restored to speech. Not only women, but inarticulate classes of men, young people and children. We are all lay figures in someone else's play. (Ardener, E. 1975:14)

S. Ardener describes the position in which people belonging to "muted groups" may find themselves and stresses the need for more work upon their specific modes of articulation.

Members of muted groups may come to an accommodation with the social structure in which they are placed, and find their own satisfactions in its interstices or outside its dominant structure. Their alternative systems of value, which may be rich and complex, should be respected and should receive greater attention than they sometimes do. (Ardener, S. 1978:28)

Harris gives an example of this preferable type of analysis in practice, and it is of especial interest here, in that the social situation of the Laymi group in the Bolivian Andes in many respects resembles that of

the minority population of Hindu Kutchi Koli in Sind; of even more importance is the manner in which women are seen to maintain this identity.

While Levi-Strauss asserts that "words do not speak while women do" (1972:61), we should not assume that men and women stand in identical relation to the language by which they communicate. In the examples given here, the women's apparent lesser command over formal language has direct material consequences in their total or partial exclusion from moments when power is being asserted, either by the individual spirit medium who attempts to manipulate the spirits, or collectively by the corporate assembly of adult males who make decisions on behalf of the community. On the other hand, it would also be mistaken to privilege this language to the exclusion of other forms of symbolic production. It is principally through weaving, song and music that Indian culture in general symbolises its separation from the outsiders which dominate it, and that Laymi culture distinguishes itself from other similar ethnic groups. In these forms of expression the men's contribution is more than matched by that of the women. (Harris 1980:75)

Thus, in some situations, women may be oppressed in our terms but perhaps not in their own. They may not speak, but they may think, act, feel and express themselves in ways that are just as important to them as are other forms. A criticism of the "muted group" concept, would therefore be - muted for whom? They may indeed be handicapped and quietened in our terms, but from this can we decide that they are in their own? The very expression is surely value-loaded. Patronising and underplaying the value of people can often prove a self-fulfilling prophecy both in real life and in academic research. For example, I know that I am just as confined by "our" categories, as Kutchi women are by theirs.

However, Harris has introduced the important variable of ethnicity.

Within the literature discussed in the introduction and in many respects, the Kutchi Koli in Sind must be seen as a caste, in that they describe themselves as Hindus and acknowledge the hierarchy and values of the caste system. Yet, in many ways, they fulfil the criteria established by Barth (1969) for an ethnic group and their definition of "self" and "others" suggests a distinctiveness which is in some respects

the antithesis of a symbiotic, interdependent caste structure.

This is probably due to their relatively isolated social context in terms of other Hindus. When however this is taken in conjunction with the encapsulating seclusion of the female group because of stricter Moslem cultural norms a very interesting social situation is found.

Barth thinks that the Indian caste system appears to be a special case of a stratified poly-ethnic system. He defines the latter thus,

Stratified poly-ethnic systems exist where groups are characterised by differential control of assets that are valued by all groups in the system. The cultures of the component ethnic groups in such systems are thus integrated in a special way: they share general value orientations and scales, on the basis of which they can arrive at judgements of hierarchy. (Barth 1969:27)

Certainly, as we have seen for the Kutchi Koli in Sind, the possession of assets necessary for survival are predominantly in the hands of another group. However, this group is composed of Moslem landlords, not the higher grades of the caste hierarchy who have not been present in the agricultural areas of Sind since Partition. This, it was evidenced, posed problems, both in terms of Kutchi "self-definition" and of "other-definition", because they do not share the same values as those of the Moslem group and there is no easy access to agreement on the level of belief, although, economically and politically, Kutchi men have learned to know their place.

Kutchi women, on the other hand, because of their isolation and lack of interaction with Moslem groups, were seen to define themselves predominantly in terms of the Hindu caste system; to regard themselves as superior to all other groups in Sind; and to maintain stringent attitudes towards purity and pollution.

Barth concentrates upon the social basis behind group ascription and therefore its ability to incorporate adaptation and change. These social boundaries enable interaction and modify or strengthen behaviour accordingly and in this we can see the processual emphasis in Barth's work. No longer cultural isolates with stagnant beliefs and histories,

ethnic groups are regarded with the potential for sometimes radical transformations. This could be said to be the case in Sind, with certain profound changes in action, for example the burial of the dead in accordance with Moslem practice, rather than burning them.

As Barth says,

Socially relevant factors alone become diagnostic for membership, not the overt "objective" differences which are generated by other factors. It makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour - if they say that they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and to let their own behaviour be interpreted and judged as A's and not B's. i.e. they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's. (Barth 1969:15)

Thus it is with the Kutchi Koli. Although in many respects they seem to share the behaviour patterns of their Sindi Moslem neighbours at the present time, it is their own definition of self which is deemed important. This definition of Kutchi Koli identity unites groups in Sind and across the border in Gujarat, India. The border is to them a political nuisance and although its effects are profound, it is irrelevant in terms of the beliefs and the encompassing nature of the social reality of the Kutchi Koli.

Barth illustrates a similar situation amongst the Pathan,

Such diversities of life-style do not appear significantly to impair the Pathans' self-image as a characteristic and distinctive ethnic unit with unambiguous social and distributional boundaries. Thus, the cultural diversity which we observe between different Pathan communities, and which objectively seems to be an order of magnitude comparable to that between any such community and neighbouring non-Pathan groups, does not provide criteria for differentiating persons in terms of ethnic identity. On the contrary, members of this society select only certain cultural traits, and make these the unambiguous criteria for ascription to the ethnic group. (Barth 1969:119)

In discussing which form these distinctions take and in which manner opposition and exclusiveness are expressed, Barth states the following, which is very pertinent in the Kutchi case.

Some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some

relationships radical differences are played down and denied. The cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies would seem analytically to be of two orders: 1) Overt signals and signs - the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life, and 2) Basic value orientations: the standards of morality and excellence by which the performance is judged. (Barth 1969:13)

Amongst the Kutchi, their language defines them as unique. They use it exclusively in their interactions with one another. Men have to use Sindhi in their contact with men from all other groups, however, in contexts where their own language is devalued. Women use Kutchi predominantly, have minimal knowledge of Sindhi and, as was seen, tend to devalue it. Similarly, dress marks out Kutchi women as distinct from any other group and also defines them as Hindu. Male clothing has become rather indistinctive and more easily adapts to different social contexts.

In terms of moral values the Kutchi define their own integrity and exclusiveness in terms of diet, marital behaviour, cleanliness, and basic "rectitude" in all things. No group is perceived as being superior to the Kutchi in any valid terms with the occasional exception of "whites", an acknowledgement of the colonial past and little acquaintance with its realities.

These beliefs accord well with the thesis proffered by Barth.

Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity. Neither of these kinds of cultural "contents" follows from a descriptive list of cultural features or cultural differences; one cannot predict from first principles which features will be emphasised and made organisationally relevant by the actors. i.e. ethnic categories provide an organisational vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems. They may be of great relevance to behaviour, but they need not be; they may pervade all social life, or they may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity. (Barth 1969:13)

In Custom and Politics in Urban Africa (1969), Cohen talks about the symbols adopted by the Hausa of Ibadan, and the ways in which these

are manipulated in order to maintain ethnic exclusiveness and thereby ethnic advantage.

In a changing system, a group will have to redefine its distinctiveness in order to adjust to the changing realities of the distribution and redistribution of power and to changes in the dominant political ideology of the encapsulating system.(Ibid.:202)

He describes the process of change as taking place under "conservative" guises as follows,

It will tend to be effected through the rearrangement of traditional cultural items, rather than through the development of new cultural items, or, more significantly, rather than the borrowing of cultural items from the other tribal groups. (Ibid.:194)

This was seen to be true to an extent amongst the Kutchi, where old moral values were given increasing importance. However, there was also a subtle tendency to emulate those of the dominant group, which involved Islamic influences for the men and Brahmanic influences for the women. This is no doubt due to lack of economic monopoly on the part of the Kutchi and the lack of potential for its acquisition. Thus, the Kutchi cannot be seen to be manipulating their ethnicity in Cohen's terms. Their problem is rather one of its maintenance.

As Barth states in this context,

If a person is dependent for his security on the voluntary and spontaneous support of his own community, self-identification as a member of this community needs to be explicitly expressed and confirmed; and any behaviour which is deviant from the standard may be interpreted as a weakening of the identity, and thereby of the bases of security. In such situations, fortuitous historical differences in culture between different communities will tend to perpetuate themselves without any positive organisational basis; many of the observable cultural differentiae may thus be of very limited relevance to the ethnic organisation. (Barth 1969:37)

This may be true within the society itself and amongst its members, where they can relax and reaffirm each other's identity, but what about external social contexts, where to be a member of an ethnic group carries a stigma?

Eidheim makes this point very clearly in his article about Lapps within dominant Norwegian culture. There, language was used as a secret code, spoken only in situations where trusted Lappish identities were involved. This type of situation is not dissimilar to the one in which Kutchi men find themselves if we read Sindi Moslems for Norwegians, and Kutchi Koli for Lapps.

In order to achieve the material and social goods they appreciate, and to share the opportunities available in the society, people have to get rid of, or cover up, those social characteristics which Norwegians take as signs of Lappishness. (Eidheim 1969:45)

Yet in most situations, this is of course impossible. As Eidheim again says,

People in the area have a good personal knowledge of each other, and can classify each other very precisely as either Lapp or Norwegian. (Ibid.:43)

Even more evident in terms of identity is the type of context portrayed by Siverts from South Mexico, which is in some measure applicable to the Kutchi Koli and to other Hindu groups in Sind.

The Indian Highlander is always an Indian whether at home or interacting with Ladinos. His destiny is shaped by a situation in which his Indianhood is the very basis for interaction. (Siverts 1969:115)

This therefore was seen to be the position for Kutchi males - devalued and ridiculed by external society but held in esteem internally vis-a-vis each other, and especially by their womenfolk. The latter experience this cultural devaluation only to a limited degree and have succeeded in maintaining their ethnic pride and a strong sense of their group's purity and identity. In this respect, the women are encapsulated in a similar manner to the Xhosa tribesmen described by Mayer (1961). Their choice is to remain "Red", for this is where they see their identity.

However, one's choice is frequently constrained by external factors. Ridd reports from South Africa a situation startlingly similar in many respects to that observed amongst the Kutchi in Sind.

The mutedness of "coloured" people in relation to white political and economic dominance,..., has produced circumstantial change in the male/female relationship within the community. It may be contended that men feel the discrimination against them as "coloured" more directly because their frame of reference is more specifically in the public sector controlled by whites. In consequence, for the "coloured" the home has been elevated as a place of refuge and women thrown into the vital endeavour of preserving the dignity of the family against the humiliation of apartheid. (Ridd 1981:190)

Here the women have had to rely upon traditional notions of identity and respectability to give them a basis of self-respect, a cultural identity other than "coloured". They manage this because of their control over their own immediate space and over those who enter that space, including their husbands.

The situation however differs from that of the Kutchi, in that it is matrifocal and the women are seen to have more actual power vis-a-vis their menfolk. Kutchi women see their subordination to their menfolk as a natural part of life. They nevertheless do not accept the subordination of their group to any other group.

The women described by Ridd have proudly adopted Moslem symbols and practices for cleansing reputed female impurity, in order to accentuate distinctiveness. This was seen to be a deliberate response to the external discriminatory situation, whereas the home was seen as the place:

"...where women must dominate for the sake of the family and community." (Ridd 1981:202)

Kutchi women, on the other hand, do not dominate nor do they devalue themselves. They retain their traditional practices because of identity pride and a filtered view of the discriminatory external environment. They are thus sheltered innocents rather than knowledgeable activists.

Barth explains why in the face of contradictory and disadvantageous circumstances, people may be slow to change their evaluations.

The actors struggle to maintain conventional definitions of the situation in social encounters through selective perception,

tact and sanctions, and because of difficulties in finding other more adequate codification of experience. Revision only takes place where the categorisation is grossly inadequate. (Barth 1969:202)

A.Cohen lists the means by which a group manages to maintain distinctiveness:

- a) Myths of origin and claims to superiority.
- b) Descent and endogamy.
- c) Moral exclusiveness.
- d) Endo-culture.
- e) Spatial proximity.
- f) Homogenization. (1969:202)

All of these means were seen to be employed by the Kutchi Koli to a certain extent, but the socio-political environment in which they find themselves of course affects their emphases and conclusions. In some measure their ethnic values could be seen to be in a state of flux, while their gender values remained constant.

It is therefore appropriate at this point to return to the issue of gender and to demonstrate its interrelationship with ethnicity in this context and in others.

Amongst the Kutchi, ethnicity was seen to be a vital component in the realm of female self/group evaluation, where the "purity" of the social order was their exclusive domain. Okely also introduces this aspect in her discussion on purity and pollution conceptualisations amongst gypsies. She describes how important it is for gypsy women to resist contamination of the inner body either from Gorgio food or sex. The woman as "entrance" to the group has a form of power that has often been similarly noted in Moslem and Hindu societies. Thus, importantly, Okely contrasts the subordination of women to men within the group, but emphasises the wider implications in terms of the relationship of gypsies to the outside world, where gypsy women retain enviable control.

The various ritual restrictions demanded of the gypsy woman will appear somewhat humiliating in the context of her own society. But when seen in terms of her relation with Gorgios they may be voluntarily acceptable reminders of her own

power: her decision whether or not to enter sexual relations with a Gorgio determines the ethnic purity of her people. (1975b:75)

Ridd describes the situation of "coloured" South African women which is again strangely reminiscent of the Kutchi.

It is a woman's duty to see that her husband is looked after. She risks being criticised by other women if she does not have his food ready on demand. While in other societies this may be interpreted as female submission, here it is a very positive performance on the part of the woman and represents the man's dependence on her for his biological needs. (1981:196)

In a different, but related area, Hirschon (1978) focusses upon aspects of Greek society, where a woman's sexual nature is seen as a constant threat to a man's integrity. Here, the social situation strikingly resembles that of the Kutchi Koli, in terms of values and attitudes and again pleads the case for a broader perspective upon the world-view of women both within and outside the Indian sub-continent.

Hirschon focusses upon role segregation, restriction upon female spatial mobility, and their social consequences. As in many societies practising the seclusion (perhaps relative) of women, it is the man's job to provide food from the outside (usually according to the wife's instructions), and the woman's job to transform the provided items into sources of comfort and nourishment. Okely's gypsy data involve perceptions of the dangers of external food before its purification by the hands of women. This was seen also to be the case amongst Kutchi women.

I will now look at the way in which Hirschon describes some of the consequences of segregation.

An interesting feature is the fact that the separation of roles is reinforced by the conviction of incompetence: neither is competent to execute tasks other than those appropriate for his or her sex. It is firmly believed that men are unable to deal with any household chores, including washing plates or clothes, sweeping, tidying or cooking. Not only is it considered inappropriate, it is also considered "shameful" for men to engage in these activities. Parallel beliefs exist regarding a woman's incompetence in dealings beyond the home, especially in any business activity. There is a total

correspondence therefore between the idea of what is appropriate, what is impossible, and what is "shameful". (1978:73)

She goes on to say that the notion of the superiority of the male sex is unchallenged, by both sexes, but the influence which a woman exerts over her husband is never denied.

Her subtle power is acknowledged by both sexes. (Ibid.:74)

This is obviously very similar to the situation found amongst the Kutchi Koli. And here perhaps we may find an interesting distinction. Whereas the woman may accept the domination of her husband as a cultural given, and act appropriately in daily life, this does not necessarily imply a corresponding devaluation of her own status in terms of the symbols which she herself deems important. (See also MacCormack, whom I earlier quoted as saying that the devaluation of domestic services is a bias of our own culture (1980:16).) Whyte similarly says,

The ability to produce and suckle children... gives women a unique structural value which is not in contradiction with their productive work and which is much more apparent and openly recognised than it is in our own society." (1981:357)

We saw in the ethnography the emphasis placed by Kutchi women on motherhood, the home, their own social group. There is a basic pride in their lives, which obviously does not stem from a recognition of their unimportance to the culture.

In the example given by Humphrey (1978) of daughter-in-law suppression in Mongolia, we view what to us may seem a crippling and exploitative system of practically de-voicing a section of the population which might prove a threat to the integrity of the agnatic group. This is not in fact in some respects dissimilar to the avoidance situation amongst Hindus described by Sharma (1978c) and by myself in this thesis, where women can be, to some extent, made temporarily invisible to those men who are popularly defined as "important" to the society.

This situation amongst the Kutchi however was seen to be at a certain stage of the domestic cycle and although it affected women in political terms, on a different level of understanding it did not alter the stable conception of womanhood maintained by Kutchi females - which is perhaps also present in other fundamentally segregated and opposed societies. The women in the ethnography were seen to express avoidance as an integral part of the life of their sex and they always attributed to it positive value.

S.Ardener describes a similar social system from the perspective of women having later gained more access to the male channels and definitions of power.

Members of muted groups, instead of ignoring the dominant group, or of merely tolerating its demands, may even go further and accept the burden of "policing" a system which to onlookers appears to disadvantage them..... Having learned their way about a system, they have a vested interest in preserving respect for their expertise and achievements. They may also be rewarded in other ways, both abstract and tangible for their rule enforcement. (1978:28)

Aspects of such behaviour were in evidence throughout this study. However, although their importance to the system was great, it was seen to be only one area of possibility for the women, and was defined by them in a somewhat ambiguous manner. For example, the women were seen to use male forms of political control in some contexts, but to conform more generally to female values. As Whyte says of Bunyole,

If we accept the argument that...(these rituals)... express a specifically female point of view, we are left with the fact that this counterpart vision is in some sense still determined by and subordinated within a discourse having a male subject. (1981: 364)

Sutton, in an analysis of the values of a segregated female group in Morocco, points to why she thinks they are unable to formulate alternative models for thought and action in our terms, but later goes on to describe an alternative thought process in action. Firstly;

This characterization of female abilities and potentialities is maintained by segregation, seclusion and female dependence, all of which limit women's experience within, as well as their

access to knowledge about, the wider society. Restricted in their ability to obtain or to formulate alternative self-images, Moroccan women cannot challenge the overall ideology of their inferiority. Instead they accept it, and work within its bounds. (Sutton 1975:588)

But:

There is a set of less formally stated concepts which contrasts men's rationality and acumen with women's inherent irresponsibility and irrationality. Women share this view of themselves, but in the privacy of seclusion also consider men as ignorant and irresponsible. This view, however, remains a submerged one, with little effect upon how men evaluate themselves. (Ibid.:588)

The emphasis here is mine, as I think she makes a very valuable and interesting point. It may indeed have little effect upon how men evaluate themselves, but it is equally sure to have a profound effect upon women's self-image, and the strength of thought they can maintain in the face of, to us, such odds may appear surprising. This response is surely the result of a deeper understanding of their own value and worth in terms of the collective representations which condition female reality. (See also Whyte 1981.)

Hirschon (1978) states that when Greek women err, women consider them "bad", but that if men do it is "in their nature". Perhaps we may not like the implications for the sexual freedom of Greek women, but it says much for their strength of belief in their own moral character, in spite of being consistently devalued about it, by men.

Ridd says,

A son's sex drive is considered natural and cannot be controlled.....Violence only further associates the male with such attributes. (1981:197)

The ethnography illustrated not dissimilar proud attitudes amongst Kutchi Koli women, in areas where we frequently ethnocentrically assume oppression or exploitation. We may thus, without participant knowledge, think of the women isolated within the village as being bored, tense and constrained. They, however, would not see themselves in these terms, but instead as safe, secure, in control, and as possessing the

means by which to reproduce the members of their own ethnic group and to define and maintain the latter's position vis-a-vis external society.

Similarly, Kutchi women have as many ideas of what makes a "good" husband, as the men have of a "good" wife. Men are prevented by women from having total control over their immediate environment, just as women are by men. Both sexes have thus accepted an ideology of complementarity rather than equality, and it is impossible to compete on the same terms.

Thus perhaps as anthropologists we can be too quick to accept what men say about women and, despite ourselves, adopt the prejudices and louder ideology of the male group; especially when we see women in roles which we would deem as highly oppressive. Perhaps we cannot quite believe what they have made of such a system, given its basic unequal foundation. An approach which takes their results into consideration by no means devalues women, but instead concentrates on their strengths.

Thus Reiter can say of research in a French village;

Women are quick to demean the public sphere in which men operate as having less value than their own.... They are secure within their realm, and do not experience their position as inferior to men. (1975:272)

This was seen to be the case for Kutchi women and was illustrated by the oppositions at the beginning of this chapter. In these, the women gave negative value to those aspects of their lives that we would have perhaps presumed to be positive and our western value-system was seen to accord more with that given by Kutchi men.

More generally Milton states,

Ironically the feminists are guilty of the bias of which they accuse their colleagues. In using information which they themselves argue is derived from men and presenting it as the cultural expression of the society as a whole, feminist anthropologists are effectively ignoring the female point of view. (1979:45)

Or as MacCormack says,

We are left to ponder our own European cultural history to discover why some anthropologists consider the conscious models which colonialized men give them to be so satisfying. (1980:19)

An example from the other side of the world and from a completely different social structure may exemplify this.

When a Melpa woman dances in splendid ceremonial attire at a pig feast, is she merely being granted a favour by her husband, as Andrew and Marilyn Strathern (1971) suggested? Or, regardless of what Melpa men say about her activities, is she acting out an aspect of her own power which is structurally central to the sociocosmic dimension of Melpa realities? (Weiner 1976:14)

Thus, interpretation, translation and emphasis must be questioned as strongly in the field of women's studies as in any other branch of anthropology. More and more we must look at our premises and evaluations and seek to know to some measure, and thereby understand to some measure, the people "out there" as "people in here." Traditional tools and measurements must be regarded warily if they seem to categorise our evidence falsely. Devaluation of the people under study was true of anthropology in the past. It is up to us to ensure that it does not happen under different guises in the present.

Perhaps nowhere is this more true than in the anthropology of women in society, where ethnographies have tended to patronise, belittle or disbelieve the world of the informants. We are often too busy apologising as to why women do not feel their oppression and attempting to find the answers in economic terms, which is the historical reason for our oppression in the west. We should look deeply at the models of other peoples before inflicting our assumptions on to their social context. Other ways can be sought to understand alternative modes of thought. As Howell states in another context, in the case of categories, there are always alternative possibilities of interpretation and therefore of associated action.

Whereas in one sense the rules could be interpreted as a restriction on their lives, it is also valid to say that the rules constitute a body of knowledge by which they can conceive of order. Knowledge of the rules and the implications of their transgression gives them a certain amount

of freedom and control over their own lives. The rules can thus be seen to be an externalised idiom, for not only controlling and suppressing the self, but also for organising the individual's relationship to himself, to his fellow man and to nature and super-nature. (Howell 1981:142)

3) IN CONCLUSION

The insights given to the Kutchi ethnographic data by the introduction of alternative models from the literature can be summarised thus:

Ardener (1975) presents a case for looking at female models of society which may be intrinsically different from those of the men. They may be intrinsically different from our own preconceptions, as we have just seen, and we must be wary of this. These female models may take the form of different cultural priorities and modes of expression. They may not be so easily identifiable for anthropologists working within an essentially male paradigm. The expression may indeed be implicit, as I emphasised in my methodological introduction, and apprehended as much through feelings and empathy as through verbal communication.

Dumont (1970) presents the ideological asymmetry of the caste system within which the structure of relations exist. The thesis indicates the existence of Kutchi women in these terms, perceiving themselves in opposition to others, and as an ideological total group. The existence of a caste structure and the acceptance of it at one level was seen not necessarily to entail a devaluation of selves in other respects. If the conceptual solidarity of the group is mutually reaffirming, questions as to inferiority do not occur. On a shared level one accepts one's place, because this is the nature of life. It proves unimportant to question deeply, or even recognise, one's own purported inferiority. The latter is therefore always apprehended externally as a pattern of injustice, which although it may have political ramifications is not internally relevant.

Barth (1969), in his work on ethnic groups, describes the existence of two types of mentality: proud, solidary, manipulative; or defensive when identity becomes a social stigma.

In the Kutchi case, both of these aspects have been shown to be in existence. The women are proud, strong and happy to identify with their own ethnic group. The men are to some extent ashamed, especially outside the village context and they there have to adapt and disguise their ethnic identity in order to suffer the least social embarrassment. Power to make their own choices in the external environment, they lack.

In the thesis women are seen as encapsulated, insular, and yet expressing a corporate mentality. Despite political and economic differences, the boundaries of household and of age, women still see things as women and in these terms essentially different to the way in which their menfolk perceive the world. In terms of men and in the terms of western society, they are dominated and powerless. They accept the asymmetrical nature of their society, but they do not recognise many of our definitions of value, and so this is not where they focus their attention.

A political wish of theirs, which has been often noted (Jeffery 1979, Sharma 1980) is to better their own position within the existing structure, rather than oppose themselves politically to men. In the present research, it was found that as a sex women see themselves as weak vis-a-vis men. Taking this as a given, they do not associatedly devalue themselves and consider themselves impure. Any impurity is perceived as temporary and as an essential part of womanhood. The fact that it is shared and that there is the possibility of its mediation and cleansing means that female impurity does not denigrate the self/group, as we would perhaps assume. Instead it emphasises conceptual bonds of solidarity in a shared reality. Gender segregation has presented them with segregated attitudes in certain respects. To be separate is not necessarily to compare, but to accept.

The women have their own world-view, language and private sphere. They have no need to denigrate themselves or change codes to cope with the outside world because of the larger society's gender norms, which are stronger than those of caste or ethnicity. This involves more of a sense of security within the female group than within the male. Similar to the findings of Jeffery (1979:174), they are, "cocooned in isolated self-importance." I would add to this that they are thus freed to maintain their own perception of reality.

That their conception of caste pride is not affected by the detrimental beliefs of the outside world is a probable result of the filtration of information by the men. This enables a secure knowledge of the safety of their internal realm and a moral group-righteousness in opposition to the outside world. The latter attributes have been noted amongst groups elsewhere, for example the Lugbara (Middleton 1960, the Hausa (Cohen 1969), gypsies (Okely 1983), to name but a few. However, the socio-economic factors present in Sind have made this a possibility for one particular gender.

We have seen earlier that Ridd has highlighted a social situation strikingly similar to that here reported amongst the Kutchi Koli. She states however, that it is exceptional and transient.

First, it is only special circumstances which produce this effect, and secondly ... it is a temporary phenomenon. (Ridd 1981:187)

The fact however that it has been observed in such disparate contexts by anthropologists who were focussing upon women's models of society, perhaps suggests a wider existence of this social process.

The rural Indian women among whom I worked... did not usually experience the home as somewhere that they needed to get away from. The ideology of purdah teaches a woman to regard the home as the one place where she feels particularly secure and important. (Sharma 1980:87)

When the seclusion factor is added to that of ethnic discrimination, the process may perhaps resemble that described by Ridd (1981) and therefore be of wider theoretical implication. As Shirley Ardener says,

Indeed, one may be tempted to argue that when the line between the hostile environment and the favourable is drawn

close to the front door, the importance of the home and the status of the woman inside, as its symbol and guardian, become correspondingly greater. The strong position of the mother in the Jewish household, which has often had to survive in hostile communities comes to mind. (Ardener, S. 1981:19)

This was found to be the situation in Sind and was especially interesting, because in the Kutchi case in terms of external, so-called "objective" factors, one would assume the potential of positive self-evaluation for the women to be totally lacking. Thus, although in this instance male ideas may be seen to be derived from economic and political status factors, women's ideas did not seem to be generated through these but simply through their isolation and segregation. In this respect, although I have no data in this area, the ideas of the Kutchi women may be closer to those of their Sindi Moslem counterparts than would hitherto have been suggested judging from accepted ideas of ideology and cultural background. (This is something however that the women themselves would refuse to admit and will probably never discover.) A theory focussing on the strength of in-group solidarity would explain the ethnic pride and conservatism demonstrated amongst so many excluded groups, not least those in the U.K., whose filtered experiences of racism do not impair the basic belief in their own ethnic superiority.

The home and the village can thus be viewed in some societies as the focal place for the generation and maintenance of ideas as to identity and solidarity. Shelters from the outside they may be, but their enclosed social actors affect that external society with the ideas which have been produced within.

To conclude, in this thesis I have looked generally at the position of a Hindu group in Pakistan. I have focussed specifically upon female attitudes within the group. I have looked at their perceptions of gender and caste identity and have described the way in which these have been formed - within a strongly encapsulated, segregated group. I have emphasised the strength and support of this group's ideology which determines all female social behaviour, in opposition to that of

the men.

I have shown how both sexes can perceive their status and identity in fundamentally different ways. I have also noted the differing modes of expression and attribution of value within the sexes. I maintain that these differences are caused by socio-political and material factors - environmental access, priority, motivation, socialisation, and the knowledge of how one's identity is defined by others.

Due to the discovery of such differences in world-view, I question some of the ethnocentric assumptions as to women's value and corresponding perception of identity in certain segregated societies. I suggest that their position vis-a-vis men is not the most important defining factor in their self-definition, providing that they perceive themselves to have an important role in terms of symbolic and practical reproduction.

The existence of similar attitudes amongst South African "coloured" women, gypsy women and Greek women, suggests that the Kutchi Koli case is not a unique example of such a mode of thought, and points the direction for further research into the social situation of similar groups where men are perhaps discriminated against in the wider context, whereas the women maintain a strong sense of value within their home and group.

Anthropologists have begun to discern that in many contexts it is theoretically dangerous to presume automatically that both sexes live within the confines of a shared ideological domain.

In this thesis, I have described a group where there is differential access to the "outside" and where the sexes belong to one group, but to two distinct parts of that group. I have demonstrated that in this case, the sexes do not share a common social situation, nor indeed a similar ideology. As Berger and Luckmann have described:

Man is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for him the dominant and definite reality. Its limits are set by nature, but, once constructed, this world acts back upon nature. In the

dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world
the organism itself is transformed. In this same dialectic man
produces reality and thereby produces himself. (1966:204)

For man, read woman.

LIST OF THE PEOPLES OF SIND

There follows a list and brief description of the peoples of Sind who will be mentioned in the thesis. Numbers are rough estimates and derive from the language study of the area made by Grainger and Grainger (1980).

1) Punjabi - Moslems. Mainly shopkeepers, but some perform agricultural work in similar village situations to the Kutchi. Punjabi and Urdu speakers. Fairly recent migrants.

2) Sindi - Moslems. Original inhabitants. Variety of occupations from very low castes, through agricultural work, to rich landlords. Proud Sindhi speakers in the main. Dislike incoming Punjabis.

3) Kutchi Koli - Hindu Scheduled Caste group. Fifty thousand in Sind, mainly the southern part. Kutchi Gujarati language - between Gujarati and Urdu, with increasing amounts of Sindhi being incorporated. Sindhi is the second language of most men. Mainly agricultural workers, although formerly labourers. Originated in the Rann of Kutch.

4) Wadiyara, Mayvasi Koli - Hindu Scheduled Caste group. Seventy-five thousand in Sind. Originated in Gujarat. Mainly agricultural workers. Second language Sindhi.

5) Tharadari Koli - Hindu Scheduled Caste. From Tharad in Gujarat. Thirty thousand people. Mainly agricultural. Second language Sindhi.

6) Parkari Koli - Hindu Scheduled Caste. From Nagar Parkar, in the south-eastern tip of Sind, bordering with India. One hundred and fifty thousand people. Mainly agricultural. Second language Sindhi. Reputedly "lower" in the caste hierarchy than the other Koli groups, but they themselves contest this.

7) Bhil - Hindu Scheduled Caste. (Often considered a tribe, as are the Koli to a lesser extent. Definitely reputed as being "lower" than the other groups. There was no outward visible sign of them contesting this, but I did not make a study of them in their own terms. Second language Sindhi. They divide up into groups as do the Koli:

Dhakti Bhil - seventy-five thousand. Trade. Agricultural work.

Marwari Bhil - one hundred thousand. Agricultural work.

8) Meghvar - Hindu Scheduled Caste. Undisputedly thought "lower" by the other groups because of their predominant occupation as leather workers. They themselves probably dispute this ascribed status however. Not even estimates available as to numbers. Second language Sindhi.

9) Odki - Hindu Scheduled Caste. Twenty thousand. Build mud walls and make bricks. Sindhi second language.

10) Bhagri - Fifteen thousand. Itinerant beggars or similar. Origin unclear. Sindhi second language.

11) Vaghri - Rajasthani origin. Five hundred families at least. Two main groups - 1) masonry work, 2) Fruit selling. Sindhi second language.

12) Padri - Whites. Fluctuating numbers. Missionaries. Engineers. Agriculturalists. Anthropologists (2). Diverse countries of origin - U.K., New Zealand, Australia, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Canada, The Netherlands, Denmark, West Germany, Norway. Mainly Christian. First or second language English and then perhaps Urdu or Sindhi. Predominantly sporadic or itinerant workers. Rich in local terms.

GLOSSARY

A list of Kutchi Koli Gujarati and Urdu words used in the text is provided below, with their English approximate translation.

- Angres (whites)
- bajan (religious song)
- bapa (Daddy)
- banevi (F7H)
- bar (heavy, pregnant)
- baran (pregnant)
- bhabbi (eBW)
- bhagat (religious leader)
- bhagatani (bhagat's wife; or slang for, "a conceited woman".)
- bhagvan (Supreme Deity)
- bhakti (salvation from sin through works of devotion)
- Bhangi (sweeper)
- bha'o (feast given to honour Ishvar)
- bhopa ("witch doctor")
- bhopi (female "witch doctor"; or married to the above)
- bhuruwi (promiscuous woman)
- bhut (ghost, spirit)
- Brahman (priests, high caste)
- chapatti (Urdu; staple unleavened bread pancake)
- charpoi (Urdu; bed)
- chundae sae (to curdle, heat up)
- dado (FF, or old man)
- dalda (vegetable oil)
- derzi (tailor)
- dhal (lentils)
- dharam (good works)
- dhoti (loin-cloth)
- divo (oil lamp - an offering)
- Divari (Devali; the Festival of Lights)
- djinn (demon)

gagara (skirt worn by Kutchi women)
Ganesh (the elephant God)
garbi (perforated clay pot containing divo)
ghi (clarified butter)
Gita (Hindu Scripture)
habkan (engagement)
Hachmo (festival dedicated to the smallpox goddess)
hahara (affinal males)
haparo (nice, decent)
Hindustan (India)
Hutani (Holi; the Festival of Fire)
Ishvar (Supreme Deity)
izzat (respect, honour)
jadhu (spells)
kalar (unproductive)
kapilo (chant used at sathi)
karasoudis (night before Divari)
kaskala (initial marriage contract)
kharas (funeral rite)
kular (sweetmeat)
ladi (bride)
lado (bridegroom)
ladu (sweetmeat)
lagan (wedding date)
limbu (berry tree)
li-pai (to plaster with mud and dung)
lolra (flour boiled in ghi and sugar syrup, at start of wedding rites)
lugara (cloth, clothes, menstruation)
mama (MB)
mamiro (gift MB brings for wedding)
mata (mother/ goddess)
mathar (fried biscuit)
mazduri (wage labouring)
mera (carnival)
moksa (release from cycle of rebirth)
moriva pat (funeral rite)

moro (bland/tasteless)
mota gosht ("big" meat)
No Northa (the nine nights)
panchayat (meeting of village elders)
pap (sin)
Parwa (day after Divari)
patel (headman)
patka (male turban)
pekora (savoury snack)
phera phar (encirclement ceremony at wedding)
pir (Moslem saint)
piti (to beat the breast)
pokundrium (spool-like inserted ear decoration)
puglagav (to bow in worship)
pukka (correct, pure, complete)
purdah (veil; female seclusion)
Quranic (pertaining to the Quran, the Moslem sacred book)
Rama (Hindu god, reincarnation of Vishnu, husband of Sita)
rotlo (unleavened bread pancake)
ruji (only, just)
sadhu (wandering ascetic, sage)
sapinda (exogamous marriage rule)
sari (draped garment worn by high caste Hindu women)
sash (buttermilk)
sathi (naming ceremony)
Savan (god)
shalwar-chemise (baggy trousers and covering top, Pakistani national dress)
shastras (Hindu scriptures)
Shikothar (goddess)
shiro (flour fried with sugar, festive dish)
Sita (Hindu goddess, Rama's wife)
Sitla Mata (smallpox goddess)
sunari (veil, headcloth worn by Kutchi women)
tili (caste/sect mark on forehead)
tul (seeds)

uthak (mud verandah)
vadav (to greet ritually)
vau (SW)
vedla (dangling earring)
veila (headcloth, veil)
viva (wedding ceremony night)
zach (patrilineage)
zamai (ZH, DH)
ziv (soul)
zivan (life-force/power)
zuleri (girl's blouse)
zunql (wild, uncultivated land)

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